

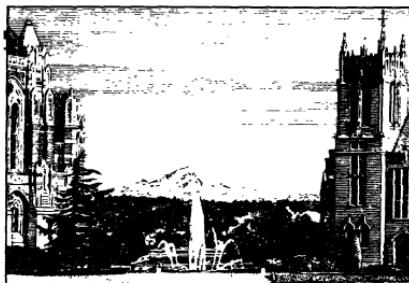




# THE ROMAN EMPIRE







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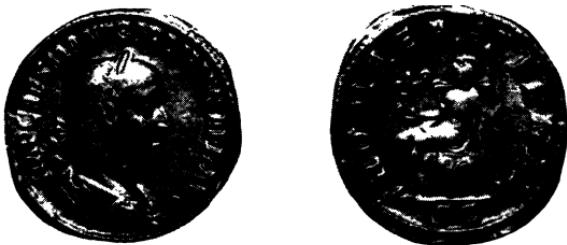
Estate of *Solomon Katz*



*The Myth of Rome's Fall*







A coin of Gordian III, A.D. 238-244, which bears the legend *Romae Aeternae* (To Eternal Rome), often used during troubled times. Here the message anticipates the thousandth anniversary of Rome's founding, celebrated in A.D. 248.

# *The Myth of Rome's Fall*

*Richard Mansfield Haywood*

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*To my wife*  
Margaret Mowbray Haywood



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Both content and expression were improved by the suggestions of my wife and of my son Richard and my daughters Mary and Anne.

I believe that the book reflects the general state of scholarly opinion on the subject as revealed in the partial studies of many scholars, but the structure and the whole course of the argument here offered are my own.



## *Contents*

I	INTRODUCTION: "ROME FELL BECAUSE . . ."	1
II	A SHORT GUIDE TO THE ROMAN EMPIRE	7
III	THE MANAGEMENT OF THE EMPIRE	18
IV	THE SECOND CENTURY: THE SO-CALLED DECLINE OF CULTURE	32
V	SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY	42
VI	THE THIRD CENTURY: THE STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN THE EMPIRE	52
VII	CHANGES DURING THE THIRD CENTURY	64
VIII	THIRD-CENTURY CULTURE: THE BATTLE-LINES ARE DRAWN	76
IX	THE FOURTH CENTURY: A TIME OF RECOVERY	86
X	THE MANAGEMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY	102
XI	THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY	122
XII	THE WORKING OF SOCIETY IN THE FOURTH CENTURY	141
XIII	"THE FALL"	155
XIV	CULTURE IN THE TIME OF CHANGE	165
	INDEX	175



# I *Introduction:* *Rome Fell Because . . .*

THE so-called decline and fall of the Roman Empire has ranked for centuries as one of the chief problems of history. Why did this great empire, which really represented the whole Greco-Roman civilization, finally cease to be? The passing of Rome typifies the whole process and the whole problem of a number of these great complexes—Egypt, Assyria, the Incas, and many others. Rome was the most important (at least to us) of all the civilizations which were but are no more, and its history is available to us in some detail.

Lately the problem has taken on a new and more practical importance with the growth of the idea that the civilization of the modern West may be showing signs of a comparable decline. Spengler's *Decline of the West* and Toynbee's *A Study of History* have probably done most to make this idea familiar to the public.

Yet there is no one book for the general reader which tells, on the basis of modern scholarly knowledge, what happened during the period of Rome's so-called decline. The purpose of this book is to tell in a straightforward and nontechnical way what contemporary working scholars think happened to the Romans.

The most common point of view in the past asserted that there must have been a definite cause or group of causes which

made Rome decline and finally fall. This way of looking at the problem is like a post-mortem examination of a human body. Some malady, not plain to external diagnosis, is found to have sapped the person's vital forces and brought about his death.

One scholar has found that Rome was undernourished because of its low productivity; another, that it had circulatory trouble because of the failure of the supply of precious metals for currency. One of the most recent theories is that the Romans as a people were ill physically; their vitality was sapped by repeated and violent incursions of the plague.

Other scholars have brought forward theories which do not suggest an analogy to a single human life. There is a racist theory that the people of Rome declined because the Romans received too many people of "inferior" stocks among their citizens. Rostovtzeff, who worked in Russia before the revolution, reflects his Czarist Russian background in his contention that Rome's civilization was bound to lose its best qualities when it was diffused among the masses. The Marxist view, on the other hand, is that the oppression of the many by the few caused the decline.

Those who specialize in politics have tended to ascribe Rome's decline to the increasing inadequacy of her political institutions. Moralists have found in the decline and fall a most satisfying example of what happens to a people guilty of luxury and immorality.

But what about Gibbon? Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* stands by itself. Although it was the first of the great works on the subject (the first volume appeared in 1776), it still is the work which first comes to mind when the subject is mentioned. Its shrewdly chosen title has become the title of the whole subject and field of discussion. It is one of the best examples of the grand style of English writing—in spite of the curious fact that Gibbon, who lived for years in France and French-speaking Switzerland, thought seriously of

writing the book in French, as a language better suited than English to a serious work.

For a working scholar the book has only a minor usefulness. The studies of scholars since the eighteenth century on the pagan historians, the Christian writers, the codes of law, and other written evidence have given us a sounder and more accurate knowledge than Gibbon could have had. Added to this is a great body of information which comes from the study of coins, inscriptions, and papyri which had not been discovered in the late 1700's. Our knowledge has been improved most of all by the labors of the archeologists, the scholars who go out and get their hands dirty and sometimes get shot at while collecting direct evidence which, unlike the written evidence, was not passed through the minds of the men of antiquity and stamped with their points of view. This gives us a fresh and independent insight.

Gibbon offers two reasons for Rome's fall. He speaks of the triumph of Christianity and the barbarians, and in another place he asserts that the vast fabric sank of its own weight. However, most of his readers are probably less interested in his judgments on causes than in his vivid descriptions and the stately music of his language.

Strange as it may seem, not a single one of these scholarly theories, neither Gibbon's nor any of the others which we have mentioned, has succeeded in winning wide acceptance among scholars. Echoes of them appear frequently in books or magazine articles written by popularizers, but among scholars there is only a resigned amusement that so many theories, and some of them so far-fetched, have been offered.

Perhaps the fact that none of these theories has satisfied scholars inspired Spengler, Toynbee, and others to attack the problem from another angle. They were perhaps also motivated by the feeling that history must be philosophical—that is, it must have its basis in universal principles.

Their approach is essentially to compare the courses of certain units of history which are larger than the histories of nations and which they call "cultures" or "civilizations." They feel that if a number of these cultures or civilizations run much the same course, we are justified in believing that we can draw up a general scheme for their lives showing a transition from infancy to maturity, old age, and death, or from springtime to summer, to autumn, and to the sere and yellow leaf.

Spengler, like many others, made the attractive assumption that organizations of men must follow some natural law such as those which regulate biological organisms or rule the procession of the seasons. Toynbee rejects the biological analogy. His method is rather to attempt to discover a causation that rules the whole course of every culture or civilization. Such methods do not attempt to find some pathological condition which the physician may note on the death certificate. Their role is more that of the philosopher, whose cold comfort for us is that all things born must come at last to dissolution, for it was so written at their birth.

Although the methods of Spengler and Toynbee have offered fascinating insights into the similarities of civilizations and although they have an eminently respectable and impressive flavor of philosophy, they bring us no nearer to a solution than the method of ascribing a single pathological cause does. Their theories simply do not correspond to the facts. When the historian of the Roman Empire studies the work of Spengler and Toynbee, he finds so many passages where the facts have been wrenched to fit the theories that he finally decides to give up and go back to the study of the evidence.

If the decline and fall of the Roman Empire had no definite pathological cause nor was it the result of an organic and inevitable development, then how can we explain it? During the last twenty or thirty years scholars who are interested in the later Empire have increasingly tended to resurvey their evidence with-

out yielding to either of these prejudgments. They have paid especial attention to the fourth century of our era, a period generally neglected by historians of ancient Rome as too late to be of scholarly interest and by medieval historians as too early, despite the fact that it was the eve of the decisive military reverses for the Empire.

Little by little scholarly opinion has swung to the view that change is not necessarily decay. The changes that took place are better understood than they used to be, and are less apt to be regarded as signs that something was wrong. Nowadays the Empire of the fourth century is not regarded, as it once was, as having been in a condition of advanced decay.

The Irish scholar J. B. Bury, who anticipated the moderns, went so far as to assert that the decisive military reverses at the end of the fourth century were a historical contingency—that is, they were due to chance. Although most scholars find this view extreme, there are others who believe that there existed no conditions of decay or decline which made a fall *inevitable*, as certain pathological conditions in human beings must *inevitably* lead to death. The noted French historian André Piganiol ends his brilliant volume on the history of the fourth century by rejecting all the best-known of the older theories and by asserting, "The Empire did not die a natural death. It was assassinated." This is a vivid way of expressing the idea that the Empire was destroyed by its adversaries at a time when it showed no signs of fatal weakness or disease.

I shall first describe the organization of the Empire in its most successful period—the second century after Christ—show how it worked, and what its problems were. Then I shall tell the rest of the story up to the sixth century one stage at a time, indicating what changes took place from age to age and why.

It will be seen that the condition of the Empire changed greatly as time went on, but in an entirely natural and intelligible way. It would indeed have been strange had everything

remained the same. Yet there is no evidence of the working out of a vast overarching causation such as Spengler and Toynbee postulate. If it is true that there is some kind of causation which inevitably brings about the fall of cultures or civilizations, the history of the Roman Empire cannot be used to prove it. We find instead that there were changes of various kinds, then in the late 300's and early 400's serious military reverses which led first to great disorder in the western provinces and finally, after nearly a hundred years, to the loss of all these provinces by the Imperial government.

## II *A Short Guide to the Roman Empire*

THE city of Rome was the center of the Empire, both physically and spiritually. It was the seat of government and the symbol of all that Rome meant: the unification of Mediterranean man under the “boundless majesty of the Roman peace,” the *pax Romana*.

The city was large, perhaps even a million people, and was amply provided with great buildings befitting its Imperial position—palaces, temples, places of amusement such as the Colosseum, libraries, law courts, and storehouses—to meet the needs of a large and rich city. Its wealth and magnificence astounded visitors and attracted every sort of adventurer, both commercial and intellectual.

In return for the products of Italy and the invisible export of Imperial power, the products of the whole world flowed to Rome. The wheat of Egypt and of Africa came in fleets of ships to the port at Ostia (“Rivermouth”), a few miles down the Tiber, and was brought up to Rome in barges together with the exotic products of “Ormuz and of Ind,” which had come from India through the Red Sea to Hormos (“Ormuz”), then to Alexandria by land, then across the Mediterranean. In the shops could be found the amber of the Baltic, live sturgeon from the Black Sea, Spanish daggers of the finest steel, the honey of Mount Hymettus in Greece, and ostrich feathers from Africa.

Italy of the first and second centuries was a well-developed and productive country. Every kind of agriculture flourished there, from the basic cultivation of cereals to such profitable items of export as fine wine and olive oil, and specialities such as guinea hens, cultivated oysters, fine fruits, or thousand-pound cheeses. Yet even in the second century there were signs that farmers in some parts of the country were having difficulty; for instance, early in the century a program of low-cost farm loans was undertaken.

Italian industry was flourishing in all basic fields, though specialties were imported from other parts of the world. Italy produced wool, the basic clothing material. The fine pottery of Arretium (Arezzo) was exported to the farthest corners of the Roman world—and even to the peoples beyond, to Germany and India.

The region around the Bay of Naples was especially strong in industry, besides being the most splendid region of Italy outside of Rome. This was a Greek region, peopled by immigrants from Greece in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., and had kept a great deal of its Greek character. Until the full development of the port of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber, Puteoli (Pozzuoli) had been the chief port of Italy.

The whole gorgeous sweep of the shore of the Bay of Naples was covered by a succession of beautiful towns, with luxurious villas filling in the spaces between the towns. Surrentum and Stabiae and Herculaneum and Pompeii and Neapolis (Naples) and Puteoli were well-built towns with a solid bourgeois population which kept in touch with the rest of the world through trade and knew all the current commercial and industrial techniques.

The region was the Riviera of the time. Baiae, on the north shore, was the chief center for the wealthy people who came to enjoy the natural beauty of the area and the curative warm springs.

The riotous living of the vacationers probably reached its height under Nero. Nero's prime minister, the philosopher Seneca, remarked in a letter to a friend that Baiae was no place for a philosopher. "Drunks singing choruses along the beach at night!" he bemoaned. "Orchestras everywhere!" He tells of a dinner boating party for which Nero had the whole surface of the nearby lake covered with roses.

About 500 B.C., the Romans threw off the domination of the Etruscan kings to the north of them, and then for over two hundred years they were busy in turning their little town by the Tiber into the mistress of all Italy. In 264 B.C. they began their first overseas war, the First Punic War, which was to bring them Sicily, their first overseas possession.

Centuries before this time Sicily had been the "America of Greece." During the great emigration movement of about 750-600 B.C.—the same movement which brought the Greeks to South Italy—swarms of colonists had left the poor and overcrowded soil of Greece for the richer soil and great open spaces of Sicily. They prospered in Sicily, but remained Greeks. We hear, for instance, of their winning contests in the Olympic Games.

For generations the Greeks of Sicily contested the possession of the island with the great Phoenician commercial city of Carthage, which was near the site of the modern Tunis in North Africa. When Rome became embroiled in war with Carthage in 264 B.C., most of the struggle took place in and around Sicily.

Here the political history of the island came to an end. It became a great granary and pasture, producing for itself and for Rome. Yet its Greek culture persisted, and the famous orations of Cicero directed against Verres provide a spectacular testimony to its wealth and the beauty of its cities, such as Syracuse. As the Roman governor of Sicily, Verres had systematically plundered the island of its wealth and works of art. Cicero's listing of his outrages upon women and other citizens, his exactions of money,

and his theft of works of art is not only a *locus classicus* for the misbehavior of Roman governors, but gives a vivid impression of the wealth and beauty of Sicilian cities around 70 B.C.

But the Carthaginians, not content with the decision of the First Punic War, challenged the Romans again. This was the great Hannibalic War (218-201 B.C.), which the Romans remembered with dread for centuries afterward. Hannibal's famous march across the Alps to Italy began in Spain, a country rich in agriculture and precious metals, with a proud and stubborn people. When at last the Romans had gotten Hannibal out of Italy and defeated him in Africa to end the war, it was only natural that they should lay claim to Spain.

In the history of Spain for the next few generations we can see the elements of the history of our Wild West—but only the American Wild West found the writers to do it justice. Such themes were not for Roman authors. Their gaze was fixed on political affairs in Rome or on traditional Greek themes. None of them would have thought to describe the booming mining towns of Spain or the fierce struggles of the natives to keep their land and avoid enslavement in the mines. We know that many men and families from Italy went west to seek their fortunes on new farming lands or in mining, but their adventures have left no record in literature.

In the second century of our era Spain produced gold, silver, lead, tin, copper, and cinnabar for dyes. The mines had fallen into the hands of the Imperial government, and they were worked systematically and very profitably. Agriculture, especially olive-growing, was flourishing. By the Tiber in Rome there is still a huge mound called Monte Testaccio, composed of fragments of jars, many of which brought oil from Spain.

There were a number of populous cities—Cadiz, Cartagena, Tarragona, Segovia, Cordoba—many of whose inhabitants were descendants of the Italians who had gone west long before. A striking feature of the rugged Spanish landscape was the daring

engineering works of the Romans, bridges that sailed serenely across the deep gorges and stately aqueducts bringing mountain water to the towns and cities.

The Roman engineer followed the Roman legions all over the ancient world. The famous Roman roads first provided strategic military routes in newly acquired territories, then carried the commerce which flourished under the *pax Romana*. Bridges and aqueducts, harbor installations, handsomely planned new towns, dams and great cisterns making agriculture possible in areas of little rainfall—all these contributed to the good life.

With the taking of Sicily and Spain the Romans had reduced Carthage's territory to North Africa. However, the Carthaginians were great traders, and after Hannibal's defeat they put all their energy into their trade and flourished exceedingly. Old Cato the Censor, seeing their prosperity while on an embassy to Carthage, was struck with fear. Cato began to proclaim in season and out of season that Carthage must be destroyed. There was opposition; Scipio Nasica maintained that the fear of Carthage was a wholesome tonic for the Romans. But Cato had his way; the Romans picked a quarrel with the Carthaginians, and, after a bitter war from 149 to 146 B.C., destroyed the city, plowed, salted, and cursed the site, and appropriated "Africa," which was roughly modern Tunisia. Scipio could only say, "Now we have no one to fear and no one to blush before." A hundred years later Julius Caesar, with characteristic good sense, disregarded the curse and re-founded Carthage, which soon sprang into vigorous new life as a Roman city.

By the second century of our era, the Romans had a strip of territory all along the North African coast from Tripoli to Morocco, bounded on the south by the desert. The Roman administration of North Africa was throughout a masterpiece of economy of force and the use of sound psychology. The chief use of force was in restraining the seasonal migrations of nomads in the interior, a process which made possible settled life and the

development of very profitable olive culture in some of the dryer areas.

Large areas along the coast, where the rainfall is better, were excellently suited for growing wheat and other cereals. The export of cereals for the provisioning of the city of Rome made these regions prosperous. Many veterans were settled in Africa by the government, and many Italians emigrated to Africa on their own account to take up farming.

In 200 B.C., just after the war with Hannibal, the Romans turned to the East. Responding to the call of the Greek city states in a spirit similar to that which took the United States into the First World War, they defeated the aggressive King Philip V of Macedonia (now the northern part of Greece) and guaranteed the freedom of the Greeks. Unfortunately the role of defender of Greek freedom was an exacting one. After a couple of generations of sordid squabbles, the Romans lost their patience, and Greece ended as a Roman province.

Greece was a poor country; its chief crop had always been men and their works. Politically and economically it counted for very little henceforth, but for the Romans the glamor of the old Greece was untarnished. Though the new Greeks were hard to deal with politically, they were still the descendants of the great men of old. Their orators were still the most eloquent, their philosophers still the most subtle, and their artists were the heirs of the great classical tradition. Athens continued through the whole course of the Empire as the great university town, and Sparta lived on quietly with her ancient and unusual customs, which the Romans admired greatly.

Little by little the Roman finger was thrust into the Asian pie. Gradually Asia Minor became Roman. Pompey the Great completed the conquest of the Near East, returning to Rome with great glory in 61 B.C. He had brought under Roman control regions which were both rich and glamorous, backward as some of this region has seemed in modern times. The arts of civiliza-

tion had been known in the Near East longer than anywhere else except Egypt. The Romans respected this part of their world for its old culture, its beautiful cities, and its artistic and manufacturing skills, much as Americans nowadays respect western Europe. Pompey's contemporaries were tremendously impressed.

Julius Caesar seems to have been about the only one who was looking toward the West. His mind was intent on Gaul, or France. To other Romans this seemed a comparatively barbarous region from which invading armies had come in the past, not to be compared to the East in culture and tradition—or in taxable and exploitable wealth. Caesar, who was a penetrating observer, saw the qualities which would make the Gauls good Romans, as well as the potential wealth of Gaul and the need for stabilizing relations with it. He went there in 58 B.C. His famous *Commentaries* describe the several campaigns by which he brought Gaul under the dominion of Rome.

So "all Gaul" became Roman and took to its new status like a duck to water. Under the *pax Romana* there was very little change in the characteristic life of Gaul, which had been a country of large agricultural estates, with towns and cities here and there. The leading men of Gaul took so readily to the Roman way that they were the first of the provincials to be admitted to the Roman Senate, and the province became as thoroughly Romanized as any. It flourished on its agriculture and its manufacture of things associated with agriculture, such as textiles.

Britain was conquered in the middle of the first century of our era. The historian Tacitus tells us that there had been some expectation of finding mineral wealth there. The Romans were also aware that Britain was a source of some unrest in Gaul, chiefly because the Druids, the priests of the old religion of Britain and Gaul, were active in Britain and stirred up the small intransigent Celtic nationalist element in Gaul.

Scholars have been able to reconstruct a good picture of Roman Britain from archeological evidence, in spite of the fact that

Roman writers tell us very little about the province. We learn of an agricultural country with large and comfortable villas, or country houses, of mining operations here and there (including mining of coal, a product not generally used by the ancients), of the typical Roman roads, of good-sized towns with the usual paraphernalia of Roman city life—London, York, Bath—and of many places whose modern names end in -chester or some other derivative of *castra*, the word for camp.

The northern course of the Rhine was the boundary between Gaul and Germany. Farther south the Romans had managed to conquer enough of Germany to draw a line from the Rhine near Mainz to the Danube near Regensburg. From this corner of Germany a line of provinces stretched down toward the Black Sea. They correspond rather roughly to some modern countries—Raetia corresponds to Switzerland, Noricum to Austria, Pannonia to Hungary, Illyricum to Yugoslavia, Moesia to Bulgaria. All were south of the Danube, except for Dacia, a part of modern Rumania.

Roman historians have left no notable accounts of the conquest of these regions; yet they were areas of the greatest importance for the Empire. The soil was good. There were iron and gold mines. The inhabitants were sturdy people who were of great value to the Empire as farmers, soldiers, and administrators.

The historian of Rome can easily be led into glorifying the qualities of the Romans of Italy, since some of his best source material consists of well-written histories which idealize the old Roman type. We must remember, however, that other men could be as tough and tenacious and skillful in administration as the Romans, especially with the old Roman example before them. The provinces of the Danube line, chiefly Illyricum and Pannonia, contributed far more than their share of the men who bore the burden of empire during the third and fourth centuries.

Trajan's campaign in Dacia (101-106 A.D.) completed the conquest of this region, an event which not only stabilized the military situation along the Danube, but also led to important eco-

nomic changes. Now the old land of Asia (what we now know as Asia Minor) came at last into full bloom, for through the port of Byzantium (Istanbul) it could ship its manufactures to this newly peaceful and prosperous region, which needed manufactured goods, and beyond it to Gaul or to the people of Germany outside the Empire.

The central position of Italy in the Empire was weakened by this development, for now the flow of goods from East to West could bypass Italy. The center of gravity of the western Empire shifted toward the north. Here we have an example of a new element of causation: the work of the men of the second century had an important effect on later centuries. We shall see other such links of causation as we discuss the life of the second century.

The encirclement of the Mediterranean by Roman possessions was completed by the conquest of Egypt. This rich province was added to the Empire in 30 B.C., earlier than Britain, southwest Germany, and the Danube lands. Egypt was not a reservoir of military manpower like the Danube provinces, but it had the wealth created by the Nile, as well as thirty centuries of recorded history, and the fame of a land of glamor and mystery. It also had Cleopatra.

By her influence on Roman men, this brilliant and forceful woman established herself as queen of Egypt and maintained her power for eighteen years. First Julius Caesar backed her claim to the throne during a time of dynastic struggle in Egypt. Later she and Mark Antony conceived the grandiose plan of reviving the glory of old Egypt and ruling the entire East together. Octavian, the future emperor Augustus, rallied the West against them and crushed their enterprise at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. In 30 B.C. he took Cleopatra's kingdom and her royal treasure. Her reputation as a bad and fickle woman is largely due to the fear she inspired in the Romans and to the assiduous Roman propaganda against her and Antony. With Octavian's victory the period which we call "the Empire" began.

Egypt was a rich prize. This great treasure helped Octavian to pay off his army, relieve a financial crisis, and get the Empire soundly launched. On several occasions he was able to tide the Empire over difficult situations by furnishing money from his immense private fortune.

But what of the Empire's neighbors, the peoples just outside the boundaries of the Empire? Beyond the famous Roman Wall in Britain were people whom we may well call uncivilized—savages who were chiefly noted for the fact that they stained themselves blue on great occasions. Far to the south the nomads of the African desert were uncivilized, too, but living so scattered about in their inhospitable environment that the Romans did not need a solid wall to keep them out. Instead they used a carefully planned network of little forts, watchtowers, and military roads which made up a defense zone thirty or forty kilometers in depth, manned by a few regular troops and by veterans who were given lands to farm and were obliged to do reserve duty to protect the frontier.

The whole frontier of the Rhine and the Danube was physically demarcated by rivers or by physical fortifications. The people outside these boundaries, however, were by no means sheer barbarians. By the second century the days of their real barbarism had long since passed away. Archeology shows that Roman products were used in Germany, and the historian Tacitus tells us that Roman traders were active there. The Germans knew agriculture and stock-raising. They had worked out orderly systems of government for units of modest size. As they learned from the Romans, they somewhat increased the size of their political units. Unfortunately for the Romans they also were willing to learn from Roman military techniques. They did not adopt city life, seeming to prefer the simpler and less fragile social and economic structure of an agricultural and pastoral life without cities. As time went on, individuals and small groups of the Germans joined the Romans, but most of them seem to have much pre-

ferred their own way of life to the more elaborate Greco-Roman way.

The Sarmatians and Scythians of South Russia were also far above the level of savages. Like the Germans, they had neither cities nor the high intellectual tradition which depends upon literacy, yet their organization seems to have been very stable. Archeologists have discovered that they had a strong taste for Persian and Chinese objets d'art, which their own artists imitated quite competently. Their native art motifs were sometimes attractive enough to be imitated by the Greek artists who saw them. Some of them, too, came as individuals or in small groups to join the more elaborate civilization of their neighbors.

The Parthian Kingdom, in the Mesopotamian region, was still another group which was civilized, yet preferred to live under a kind of feudal organization governmentally and economically less complicated than that of the Romans and very well suited to the necessities of their environment. Mesopotamia was one of the very oldest seats of civilization. The Parthian realm included many Greek cities founded by Alexander the Great, which apparently were able to live along happily as Greek urban centers amid the surrounding feudal organization. For centuries the Parthians and the Romans were political rivals, yet it was only seldom that the rivalry flared up into warfare.

We must not think of the Empire as surrounded by wild men who surged incessantly against its boundaries, although the wealth of the Empire was temptation enough to make strong frontiers a necessity. We know that trade was generally active in both directions, and on all the frontiers the Roman influence radiated outward to act upon the neighboring peoples.

### III *The Management of the Empire*

MOST people and most organizations are rarely fully efficient, but once in a long time a man, an organization, or an empire does work at full efficiency for a while. The Romans of the second century of our era did so. For over a hundred years they managed to solve *all at once* a set of persistent problems which most governments have known, problems which were difficult and distressing for the Roman governments before them and after them.

The most important of these persistent problems of government are the maintenance of the authority of the central government, the regulation of the succession to the throne (or to the office of chief executive), finance, foreign affairs, and the army.

The first problem, the maintenance of the authority of the central government, was a pressing problem in the early days of the United States. The second, the succession to the executive power, has not been a problem in the United States, since the presidency passes from one man to another with majestic simplicity and never a hint of conspiracy or civil war to upset the constitutional method of succession. The latter three problems are much with us nowadays.

All these problems troubled the Romans both before and after the second century.

Failure to deal with the first problem, that of maintaining the authority of the central government, had caused the downfall of

the Republic and the establishment of the Empire. The Roman Republic was not a democracy but an aristocratic republic. The citizenry had the privilege of electing the consuls (the two chief executives, chosen annually) and the other officials—but the candidates for election were all of the aristocracy, and the management of affairs was really in the hands of the senatorial aristocracy.

Until about 200 B.C. the aristocracy gave Rome a good government. At about that time, however, the senators began to perceive the possibility of profiting personally from the rich overseas provinces which Rome was conquering. Senators who had served as consuls were sent out with the title of proconsul to govern the provinces. They found that they could enrich themselves at the expense of the helpless provincials, for there was no authority adequate to restrain them. Political life turned into a scramble for the loot to be had by those who gained high office.

There was no way of keeping an effective watch on the governors of the provinces to check their misconduct, since the senators at home were eagerly awaiting their own turn to become governors and plunder the provincials. Likewise the quality of government at home deteriorated. Bribery in elections became rampant, since election to the consulship was the preliminary to becoming proconsul and acquiring great wealth. Ambitious men who had intrigued their way to the command of armies could openly force the government to grant their demands; civil war between rival generals became almost chronic.

Julius Caesar used every known trick of Roman politics, and invented a few new ones. Yet, if he was as corrupt as the other senators of his time, his remarkable farsightedness made him see that there must be a change. He became dictator and apparently intended to make himself king. The reforms which he made before his assassination show plainly that he intended to re-establish the authority of the government and to check the abuses in which he himself had participated. A group of senators, among

whom Brutus and Cassius are the famous names, murdered him in the name of "freedom."

After his death there was more than a decade of struggle. Caesar's great-nephew Octavian joined with Mark Antony, Caesar's right-hand man, to defeat Brutus and Cassius and the army of the senatorial aristocracy. Then Octavian and Antony divided the Roman world between them, but Antony was enticed by Cleopatra into an ambitious scheme of joining the eastern provinces to Egypt as a new kingdom. Octavian defeated them at the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C. and emerged as sole master of the Roman world.

He was determined not to return to the old system; yet he was too shrewd to call himself king, which had been one of the most hateful words in the Roman vocabulary since the Romans expelled their Etruscan rulers in 509 B.C. Instead he proclaimed the restoration of the Republic. The Senate presented him with a remarkable set of powers to enable him to set the state on its feet after the long struggles.

The "proconsular power" was now bestowed upon Augustus, giving him supreme command of all the armies, with the actual provincial proconsuls subordinate to him. He now was commander in chief of all the active armies and could exercise control over the soldiers by his power over their pay and bonuses. This system was devised to forestall the possibility of an attempt on the state by an ambitious proconsul.

He also was granted the "tribunician power," that held by the tribunes, or protectors of the people, which made his person inviolable and gave him the power to initiate legislation and veto any act of any official. The grant of the power held by the censors under the Republic allowed him to control the list of citizens, to make men senators, and to remove from the Senate men of immoral life. He could also exercise the judicial power inherent in the proconsular and tribunician powers.

When the high priest, or *pontifex maximus*, died, his office

came to Augustus, giving him control of the official religion. Henceforth this was the only office Augustus regularly held; he did not formally hold the other offices, but merely the powers belonging to them. His title of *princeps civitatis*, or "first citizen," was not the title of an office; it was merely the symbol of the *auctoritas*, or prestige, of one who was undoubtedly the first citizen of Rome. By virtue of this remarkable set of governmental fictions he could control the state as well as if he were in fact a king, without the need of using the hateful word. He repeatedly asserted that the structure of the Republic still existed and that he was guiding the course of government only by virtue of his prestige.

Merely to list the details of this strange system and to call attention to the great personal ability of Augustus does not, however, give the key to the constitutional development of Rome in the first two centuries of the Empire. Why did one branch of the government grow steadily in power at the expense of another, as the emperors grew in power at the expense of the Senate?

A large part of the answer is simply that Augustus and his successors solved the problem of restoring the authority of the government, which had been impaired by the mismanagement and rivalries of the senatorial aristocracy. The *pax Romana* was inaugurated. Civil war was ended; the boundaries were well protected; the sea was cleared of pirates. Perhaps best of all, the provincial governors were closely watched, and those who tried to rob the provincials were rigorously prosecuted. The credit for the new order of things naturally went to the emperors, and the Senate declined in strength and prestige.

The process of putting the government in order was not completed, however, until the second century, for there still was need of building up an adequate civil service, a need which the old senatorial government had neglected. Julius Caesar was hard put to it to make his new government function without the co-operation of the old privileged class whose position he had at-

tacked. The same was true of the emperors of the first century of our era. Some of the aristocracy were willing to serve the imperial government. Others refused to do so.

The reign of Vespasian, from 69 to 79 A.D., should really be regarded as the beginning of the second century, since Vespasian instituted many of the practices which characterize that century. He was the first of the emperors to systematically draw his civil servants from outside Rome, calling in able men of local reputation who previously could not have hoped to find places in the service of the Imperial government.

Many of the choicest positions, such as military commands, governorships of provinces, and memberships on important commissions, were still reserved for senators; but after Vespasian's time the emperors tended increasingly to fill vacancies in the Senate by appointing men from Italy and the provinces instead of from the old Roman aristocracy. We also hear far more of the equestrian order, sometimes called the knights. In the earlier Republic the knights had been well-to-do men who did not belong to the senatorial order; they derived their name from the fact that they were required to provide themselves with horses when they were called for military service. Gradually they had changed into an order of businessmen—banking, engaging in trade, or forming companies to collect the taxes and execute government contracts.

By the time of Trajan (98-117) and Hadrian (117-138) a wide range of high civil service posts, many of them unknown during the Republic, were regularly filled by knights. The knights held the cabinet posts, the most important juristic positions, and the important posts in charge of the government's business affairs—finances, taxes, public property, etc.

The emperors of the first century, then, made a good start on solving the first of our group of persistent problems, that of maintaining the authority of the central government. The harm done in the late Republic was largely repaired, and the emperors of

the second century pretty well completed the process of restoration. But a government rarely manages to solve all its problems at the same time. The government of the first century, while making good progress in the first field, was failing spectacularly to solve the second problem on our list, the problem of regulating the succession to the throne.

Since Augustus claimed not to be a king, he was hardly in a position to establish a firm rule of succession. After the deaths of several younger members of his family whom he had tried to maneuver into position to succeed him, he was succeeded at his death (14 A.D.) by his stepson and adopted heir Tiberius. There was no dispute about the matter, since Tiberius was obviously the man best equipped for the place. After the reign of Tiberius, however, we have a startling series of plots, intrigues, murders, and interference by the army.

After the death of Nero in 68 A.D. there was real civil war, with the major armies in the provinces putting forward candidates for the throne. Vespasian, the victor, tried to institute strict hereditary succession, and was in fact succeeded by his sons Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96).

However, the attempt to establish a dynasty was unsuccessful. Domitian's insistence upon complete autocracy led to his murder and the installation of the elderly Nerva. Nerva adopted the vigorous Trajan as his son and was succeeded by him when he died in 98. Following this the throne passed three times to relatives of the emperor, if not to sons, and the results were excellent. From 96 to 180 A.D. we have a series of five men who are sometimes known as the Five Good Emperors: Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius (138-161), and Marcus Aurelius (161-180). Marcus Aurelius was the only one who had a son of his loins of an age to succeed him. When he died of the plague in 180, he was succeeded by his incompetent son Commodus, and the great days of the second century were over.

Gibbon pauses at one point in his narrative to philosophize

upon the manner in which thrones devolve. He points out that the system of hereditary succession may clothe in the purple those who are weak of will or even dim of wit, but that to have no fixed path to the throne is bound to cause constant intrigues, plots, and even civil wars. Although the emperors of the second century had great success in handing down the throne from the best man to the best man, they failed to establish a principle of succession which was strong enough for all circumstances.

Finance—the third of our persistent problems—was a major problem at the end of the Republic because of the damage and the uncertainty caused by the civil wars and the irresponsibility of the senatorial aristocracy in putting its ambition for money and personal power before its duty as a governing class. Although such behavior on the part of senators was impossible under the control of the emperors of the first century, two of the emperors themselves, Gaius (37-41 A.D.) and Nero (54-68), caused serious difficulties by their unbounded extravagance.

In finance, as in other fields, we find Vespasian initiating policies which are typical of the second century. He was the first emperor to give Rome what we should call a sound business government. He had served the government most of his life in a series of both civil and military posts and probably had as good a knowledge of practical government as any man of the time. The ancient authorities are regrettably vague about his financial reforms, though they testify clearly that his tightening up of the system caused resentment everywhere. He seems to have raised the rate of many taxes, but not unreasonably, considering the general prosperity of the time. He brought new efficiency to the tax-collecting bureaus. He even invented certain ingenious ways of gaining revenue. He had the land surveys checked all over the Empire and claimed certain unoccupied lands for the government. He annoyed the people of Alexandria by selling the palaces of the former kings of Egypt. It was said that when his son Titus remonstrated with him about the indignity of installing public pay

toilets, Vespasian offered him a coin and asked him if the source of the money affected its smell.

The fourth problem, foreign affairs, was most efficiently dealt with during the second century, partly by force, partly by diplomacy, and partly by the use of money. One great crisis in foreign affairs, strangely enough, was caused by the successful wars of the brilliant soldier Trajan, which resulted in the conquest of Dacia, north of the Danube, and a large territory in the Near East, bringing the Empire to its greatest extent. But Trajan's successor, Hadrian, shrewdest and most farsighted of all the emperors, perceived that the new territories in the East would be difficult and expensive to defend and that their traditional organization was such that they would be hard to fit into the imperial system. Therefore he withdrew from the newly-won lands, in spite of the indignation of the traditional imperialists, and turned all his energies to the development of the Empire.

The management of the fifth persistent problem—the army—is a difficult one for any nation. Ideally the soldier and the citizen should be one. The feeling of the soldier that he was a neglected member of the state had been a major problem of the late Republic, but in the second century the problem was most successfully dealt with.

The ordinary man in the provinces could now enlist in the Imperial army and serve a fairly long term, sixteen to twenty years, as a professional soldier, then retire with a bonus which would set up a small farm in his native place or in the place where he had served. Non-citizens could acquire Roman citizenship by this means. Military service was a powerful instrument of Romanization, for the soldier would learn Latin in addition to the Punic or Celtic or Illyrian which he had spoken at home. He would acquire the sense of Roman discipline. The circulation of soldiers from province to province replaced local pride with a sense of membership in a great body politic. This opportunity for participation in place of subjection made army service eagerly sought

and highly prized by the provincials. It represented a new status for a man as a member of the Empire.

This constant recruitment of provincials for the army and the civil service led up to the greatest single achievement of the emperors of the second century, the transformation of the Empire into a commonwealth of Mediterranean man. In this manner the emperors reverted to one of the best and most admirable attitudes of the statesmen of the early Republic.

The great strength of the Republic had been willingness to recruit. As the Romans conquered their Italian neighbors, they organized them into a tight federation which gave them substantial benefits and ensured their loyalty to Rome. Many of their leading men moved to Rome to achieve high and honorable positions there.

This system was not extended, however, to the overseas conquests, of which Sicily was the first (241 B.C.). For one thing, the people outside Italy seemed less like neighbors and relatives. For another, the Romans began to enjoy the profits of empire as they took over the royal revenue system of Sicily, the mines of Spain, the rich wheat fields of Africa, and the industrial regions of Asia Minor. Italy remained a federation under Roman leadership; but the peoples of the overseas provinces were exploited as subjects. Roman citizenship was very slowly extended to the leading men of the provinces, in accordance with the principle of relying on the cooperation of the well-to-do. Even during the first century of the Empire, when the emperors were trying to rule all the people with justice, there seems to have been no idea of relinquishing the privileged position of Italy as the mistress of the Imperial system, dominating the subject provinces and receiving tribute from them.

Thus the movement of the second century toward a commonwealth was an attempt to do with all the varied peoples of the Empire what the earlier Romans had done with the peoples of Italy. To unite the peoples of Italy instead of merely subjecting

and exploiting them had been a brilliant idea. To unite the men of the whole Empire, from Britain to Mesopotamia and from the Atlas Mountains to Hungary, under the rule of law and with ideas and ideals which they all could accept, was one of the great ideas of all time. It was a new idea; previous empires were based on exploitation.

The great movement was carried on with true Roman practicality rather than with careless sentimentality or with great sweeping gestures. The people of rural areas were encouraged to organize themselves into a *civitas*, or what we call a township. Some of the nomadic peoples in the southern parts of Tunis and Algeria, for instance, were enticed into settling down in townships. After the township had operated successfully for a generation or two, it could petition the Imperial government to be raised to the higher status of *municipium*, or town. With the achievement of this status the magistrates of the town became full Roman citizens, or sometimes all those on the list of men eligible to be coun-cilors became citizens.

After another suitable lapse of time the town might sue for the status of colony, *colonia*. This was an honorary title, which did not imply the sending out of settlers, but did imply an equality of status with colonies which had actually been sent out from Rome in the earlier days and had consisted of citizens. In the American scheme it would be a city. The *colonia* was fully under Roman law, and every member of the *colonia* had Roman citizenship.

There is a flood of evidence for the enthusiasm with which the local organizations, especially in the West, sought advancement in these grades of *civitas*, *municipium*, and *colonia*. Not only did the inhabitants eagerly petition the emperor for the next higher status, but they so enthusiastically poured out money to beautify their native places that historians often speak of the second century as "the age of display."

Men presented town halls, theaters, statues, triumphal arches

dedicated to the emperor, porticoes in the forum, or even funds for annual festivals. Many of these structures still exist, some of them in the midst of modern towns—such as Tripoli, or Vienne and Orange in France—some of them in places now uninhabited.

We can see that a great deal of care and thought went into this movement. Sometimes an inscription on a triumphal arch will mention the fact that the governor of the province came to a modest town in his jurisdiction to be present at the dedication. The emperor Hadrian spent years traveling through the provinces, studying their needs and capabilities, increasing enthusiasm by his mere presence, and presenting buildings such as town halls, which were designed by a team of architects who accompanied him.

Hadrian also allowed himself to be made an honorary archon, or city councilor, of Athens, a graceful move of reconciliation between the old fame of Athens and the new power of Rome. He issued a beautiful series of coins on which the provinces of the Empire were represented, each typified by its chief feature or its chief contribution to the Empire. These “province coins” are some of the finest examples of the art of influencing public opinion by coins.

There was still another way of directing men's emotions toward the purposes of the Empire: a great cult of loyalty to the person of the emperor was skillfully set up. Certainly personal loyalty to monarchs can be a powerful force in the life of a nation, as is shown by the role played by the modern English monarchs. The Roman system was more complex, since in the eastern part of the Empire the immemorial custom was to revere the monarch as divine.

To the practical-minded emperors this situation presented no difficulty. In the East they accepted the divine honors which were thought to be due to any properly established ruler. It is surprising to see how individuals, cities, and whole provinces vied for primacy in the observances of the cult of the emperors.

In the West, on the other hand, they received the sort of honors which were thought suitable for popular monarchs. Annual festivals were celebrated, such as the emperor's birthday or the anniversary of his accession. There were banquets, programs of gladiatorial fights or horse races, distributions of small presents, and even festivals of roses.

All this amounted to what nowadays would be called a change in the cultural pattern. A new pattern was set up in which men's lives were related most of all to this great organization unlike any organization which the world had ever seen. All good things arose under the boundless majesty of the Roman peace—safety, prosperity, and especially a man's status, his feeling that he had a definite place and membership in a local and world society which was in good working condition.

This change may be illustrated by some of the literary evidence. A Swiss scholar, Harald Fuchs, has collected evidence, mostly from first-century sources, of a strong feeling among the people of Greece and Asia Minor against the Romans as boorish invaders. Acid remarks made to individual Romans and unflattering descriptions of the Romans as a group remind us more than a little of the sort of thing which the Europeans have said about the United States. The Greek heirs of an older culture had to recognize the temporal superiority of the Romans, but they freely expressed their feeling that the conquest had been brutal and greedy, that the Romans were low fellows and devoid of the finer perceptions, and that Rome itself was no place for a civilized man to endure longer than he had to.

About 100 A.D. we see signs of another kind of feeling toward the Romans. Plutarch, the author of the famous parallel lives of great Greeks and Romans, was one of the men from the provinces who had entered the service of Rome and had risen to high office. Suddenly he decided to renounce his Roman career and returned to the little town in Greece where he was born. He became one of the priests of the antiquated but venerable cult of

Apollo at Delphi and devoted himself to a kind of school, the aim of which was to interest young Greeks in the great Greek culture of the past.

Plutarch wrote his *Lives* as part of the same plan. He chose Greeks pre-eminent in government and warfare and set the biography of each beside that of a famous Roman. Greek superiority in the fields of literature and philosophy and science was plain enough and was gladly admitted by the Romans themselves. Plutarch wished to remind the Greeks that even in the fields where Rome claimed superiority, the fields of practical and public life, Greece could show a great man to compare with every famous Roman.

Apparently the Roman way of life had become so attractive that those Greeks who, like Plutarch, cherished the Greek way and the Greek past feared that Greece would be submerged completely by the new Roman way of life which was then being skillfully promoted by the Romans. One is reminded of the "Americanization" of Europe and the lively opposition to it in some quarters.

The final phase of the changing Greek attitude toward Rome is represented by a speech delivered in the middle of the second century by a famous Greek rhetorician, Aelius Aristides, in praise of the city of Rome. The ancient world so loved fine oratory that men like Aristides could travel about the Empire giving speeches and find a hospitable reception and enthusiastic hearers everywhere. Praise of the city where the speech was delivered was a standard topic, governed by certain well-developed conventions. Aristides' speech in praise of Rome follows all the conventions, but goes beyond them to eulogize the imperial city for having developed a commonwealth of all civilized mankind. The distinction between Greeks and barbarians, he said, has been replaced by the distinction between Romans and non-Romans.

No doubt this Greek spoke for others beside himself when he justified the history of Rome and her present position as having brought to the world something which was of benefit to all man-

kind. The Roman peace had come to mean the formation of a new kind of great community as well as the cessation of constant damaging warfare in the Mediterranean world. The people of the great community responded by making their peace with Rome and accepting the Roman way.

# IV *The Second Century:* *The So-Called Decline* *of Culture*

ABOUT halfway through the period from Vespasian to Marcus Aurelius Roman literary production slowed down and practically ceased. Rarely again did the pagan Romans produce any belles-lettres of high quality. Moreover, there were few notable scientific discoveries during this period, although certain very learned handbooks and summaries of science were compiled.

Many scholars assert that the intellectual life of the period showed unmistakable signs of decay. One noted historian, Tenney Frank, has characterized the age as unable to produce a single new idea of any sort. The German historian Mommsen said that the second century was suffering from intellectual fatigue. This way of labeling the *Zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, is part of the standard method of the so-called philosophical historian. Actually it is of very little use as a historical tool, since the only method of determining the spirit of an age is by analyzing in detail the beliefs and motivations of all groups constituting the society. Obviously there have been very few ages in history which were sufficiently unified in belief and motivations that one formula would summarize the entire period. During the history of the Roman Empire there were no such periods.

In this chapter we shall discuss the literature, the art, the

science, and the juristic studies of the second century. It will be seen that the men working in each of these fields were of different types, that they were working under different conditions, and consequently the results of work in each field varied in excellence. It is impossible to find a single formula to describe the whole range of second-century culture.

The chief difficulty of the literary men seems to have been that they imprisoned themselves in an ivory tower. The tradition which limited the choice of literary themes was so strong that the old themes of epic and Greek mythology were reworked to the point of exhaustion. Once in a long while someone tried a modern subject, such as Juvenal's satires on the big, dirty, rich, wicked city of Rome, but most men were content to write about the heroes of the Trojan War or the old stories of Thebes which had furnished the material for the great Greek tragedies of five hundred years before. Even the men from the provinces who came to join the literary circles in Rome chose the same old subjects, leaving untouched the life of their own native places.

Although it would be an attractive conjecture that the more vigorous men simply became tired of a field so limited by tradition as literature, we cannot make this assumption without offering a reason why it should have happened just at this time. One possible reason is that the emperor Hadrian, in his enthusiasm for Greek culture, tried to promote Greek literature and even disparaged Latin literature. The influence of the throne may well have discouraged some of the men who would have written in Latin.

Another reason is the growing attractiveness of other careers for vigorous men. New careers in the service of the government, both honorable and profitable ones, were opening up at this time. The life of one writer seems to illustrate this principle in reverse, for we have reason to believe that the satirist Juvenal did not turn to writing until he was forced to give up his hope of obtaining a government place.

Since the times were good, some men may have been turned away from literature by opportunities in trade. Many Roman writers came from the equestrian order, which traditionally engaged in trade. At such a time an active life may well have seemed more attractive to many than a literary life.

Men who could deal with words were perhaps most likely, however, to be seduced from writing by an oratorical career. Although political oratory in the grand style was no longer possible under the emperors as it had been in the Republic, yet the courts were busy and were an open avenue to fame and fortune. It is hard for us to realize what a passion the ancients, both Greeks and Romans, had for fine oratory, whether practical oratory or the oratory of display and entertainment. The orator did not need to feel that he had chosen the second best in choosing the spoken word rather than the written word for the exercise of his powers.

The notion of intellectual fatigue may as well be discarded as far as literature is concerned. Why should there have been intellectual fatigue at a time when the Romans were drawing in new blood from every part of the Empire? What is it, anyway? If you try to define it and show how it works, you find yourself at once involved in insuperable difficulties. Nor must we forget that Christian literature was just starting at this time. The Christians had something that they wanted very much to say and they did not care whether it was a traditional subject or not. If intellectual fatigue was general, it should have affected them, but they were full of their subject and wrote about it energetically.

Where tradition binds a human activity so that it cannot change with the times, that activity is likely to wane or disappear. The ancient world by no means lost its interest in the great classical authors of Greece and Rome nor in education based on those authors, and the level of competence in writing Greek and Latin remained very high; but from this time on the most vigor and

conviction were shown by the Christian writers and the writers on purely factual subjects like the scientists.

The fine arts were flourishing at this time. Some historians of ancient art would object to this statement, for they grant true excellence only to the art of the great period of Greece. Yet it is possible to admit the unique quality of the best Greek art even while asserting that the producers of works of art in the second century were vigorous men who turned out work of good quality appropriate to the ideas of their time. There was an immense demand for works of art. Whatever could be skillfully designed and executed would find a ready market, whether it was a town hall, an aqueduct, a private house, a statue, a fine article of clothing, a table, or an ornamented dagger.

One great demand of the age was for monumental architecture, not only at Rome, but all over the Empire. The tomb of the emperor Hadrian, which still stands on the bank of the Tiber in Rome as the Castel Sant' Angelo, is a typical product of the time in its massive solidity.

Hadrian, who rather fancied himself as an amateur architect, built a great villa at Tivoli, a few miles from Rome, and its extensive remains may still be seen there. Once it was the custom to deride this villa as a medley of every known style. Current scholarship has come to realize that it was Hadrian's right to mix styles if he chose deliberately to do so, and that some acute architectural thought is shown even by the remains of the buildings.

All over the Mediterranean world hundreds of structures of various kinds remain to testify to the general enthusiasm for building at this time. Small towns, as well as large cities, were aroused by Hadrian's trip through the provinces to build town halls or theaters or forums. Many triumphal arches were erected in honor of the emperors, all more or less of the style of the ones which may still be seen in Rome. The Pont du Gard at Nîmes, in France, shows us what a magnificent structure the Roman architect

could make of an aqueduct. At El Djem (the ancient Thysdrus) in French North Africa there is a fine amphitheater, the third largest of the Roman world.

In Rome and other large cities architecture was at a high level of excellence. New ideas were more likely to appear in the big cities, ideas such as the spiral band of sculptured pictures which winds around and up the Column of Trajan, pictorially telling a continuous story of his warfare. This kind of pictorial narrative, probably first developed at this time, is (quite seriously) the ancestor of the modern comic strip. Under Imperial patronage, various architectural problems connected with large buildings, especially problems of roofing, began to be resolved. In a surprising number of smaller places a reasonable level of architectural competence was shown. The product was not lifeless and imitative, but faithfully reflected the interests of the time and showed an ability to progress.

A new tendency in portrait sculpture, which was to end in the fully developed medieval style, began in the second century. Sculptors began to chisel more deeply to obtain effects of light and shadow, especially in dealing with the hair. A new texture of the face was obtained by treating the face with a rasp. A tendency towards symbolism became prominent, replacing the straightforward realism which had been current. Historians of art have justly disparaged the quality of the many copies of older Greek sculptures which were made at this time. But these copies should not be regarded as pure art. They were decorations produced for patrons who were not sure enough of their own taste to commission something new, but wanted something "safe" and conservative. Anyone who has ever heard an American architect of twenty or twenty-five years ago complain about the demands on him for imitation colonial houses will sympathize with the men who had to turn out these sculptures.

There were other respects in which the art trade of the Empire resembled that of the United States. Agents scoured Greece and the

East for works of art to be resold to wealthy Romans. Literary descriptions of the villas of the wealthier Romans make them sound practically like art museums. Many people in the western provinces had an attitude similar to that of Americans toward European products. A well-to-do man would obviously take pride in embellishing his house with materials from Rome or some famous city of the East, received in exchange for the primary goods, such as wheat or olive oil, which were produced on his estate. The work of local craftsmen in silver or wood or wrought iron or ivory could not rival the work done in the great centers of long tradition, nor was the consumer's pride of ownership as satisfied with local work, so works of art were often sent long distances.

For example, archeologists have discovered that there was an ingenious method of exporting fairly large mosaic floors. The factory would lay out perhaps sixteen good-sized tiles, then cement one-sixteenth of a mosaic picture onto each tile, working from a sketch which had been ruled into sixteen divisions. The sixteen tiles would then be boxed and exported, with the sketch accompanying them. Local workmen would arrange the sixteen pieces according to the sketch to make a handsome mosaic floor for the house of some wealthy landowner in Africa or Gaul.

From the artistic point of view these mosaics were lively and attractive. This art was not declining, but had its best days yet before it. The allied art of painting was highly developed in antiquity; but almost all of the output of ancient painters has perished. The paintings of the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. preserved on the walls of houses at Pompeii give us an idea of the skill of contemporary painters. There are landscape scenes which give the illusion of looking through an open window to the outdoors; other walls are adorned with scenes from mythology or formal designs. The "House of the Vettii" has charming groups of chubby Cupids performing such tasks as goldsmithing or manufacturing perfumes. Second-century painting

is represented chiefly by the frescoes of the catacombs, the underground burial places of the Christians. The originality of these paintings lies in their application of current techniques to Christian themes, such as Old Testament illustrations of God's power to save in adversity, rather than in the use of new techniques.

By the second century the great days of ancient science were over, after many hundreds of years of activity and some great achievements. The reason for the failure of science to continue its advances, however, was not intellectual fatigue but the law of diminishing returns in a field to which rigid limits had been set. The scientists of the second century showed praiseworthy energy in writing good handbooks to consolidate the work which had been done by their predecessors.

The Romans had never shown the aptitude for subtle and abstract thought which was one of the strongest characteristics of the Greeks. The scientists of Roman times were all Greeks by birth. Only a handful of men, as compared to today, took an interest in the study of mathematics and astronomy and medicine. The engineers, like the artists, were artisans. Once in a while they learned something from the scientists, or once in a while a pure scientist descended briefly into the heat and the turmoil of practical problems, but in general the two groups were separate.

The complete separation of mathematical and astronomical science from practical ends was consistent with the atmosphere of the ancient world, where a gentleman was very much the gentleman and devoted himself to what were considered a gentleman's occupations—which generally were government or letters. This attitude was much like that of English scholars in the last century, when a mathematician could offer the toast, "Here's to pure mathematics; may it never be worth a damn to anyone!" and the humanistic faculty members regularly referred to the chemistry department of the school or university as "stinks."

Plutarch, who lived in the second century, gives us an interesting illustration of this point of view. In his *Life of Marcellus* he

describes some of the ingenious mechanical devices made by Archimedes (just before 200 B.C.) at the urging of his kinsman the king of Syracuse, in Sicily, and gives a vivid description of the repulse of a Roman assault on Syracuse by the secret weapons which Archimedes had devised. "Yet Archimedes possessed so high a spirit," he says, "so profound a soul, and such treasures of scientific knowledge, that though these inventions had now obtained him the renown of more than human sagacity, he yet would not deign to leave behind him any commentary or writing on such subjects; but, repudiating as sordid and ignoble the whole trade of engineering, and every sort of art that lends itself to mere use and profit, he placed his whole affection and ambition in those purer speculations where there can be no reference to the vulgar needs of life."

Historians of science agree that this lofty and abstracted attitude made it impossible for ancient science to go beyond certain limits. The further advance of science had to wait for other peoples who did not set such rigid boundaries to the matters which they would investigate.

Studies of the nature of matter never got beyond speculation, since the practical struggle with matter was considered vulgar. People in the trades knew some chemistry, but among the scientists there was no study of chemistry. Physics consisted of leverages and other matters connected with basic machines such as pulleys and wedges—studied not so much as aids to daily living but as proofs of great natural laws which might delight the chaste fancy of the philosopher. It is characteristic of the ancient attitude that although experiments were made which clearly showed the power of steam, they were made only as an illustration of natural laws, not as something of possible use to mankind.

Geology and botany never got started as sciences. Aristotle, who apparently was no gentleman, did genuine biological studies, but found few to follow him in wading through guts and blood.

Astronomy was ardently studied for a time, since it obviously

rested on great natural laws and seemed to promise some insight into the nature of the universe. Yet without the invention of new instruments, a need which the abstract-minded scientists disdained to consider, it of necessity slowed down and ceased. Geography also flourished for a time as a companion of astronomy devoted to finding out the nature of the terrestrial globe.

Mathematics is certainly the most abstract of the sciences. It was not as closely limited by Greco-Roman prejudices as was astronomy, since its very abstractness left it a wide domain in which to work and freed it from the prejudices which were connected with manual work and economic gain—nor was it limited by the need for the development of delicate instruments of observation. This branch of science, accordingly, preserved its vitality and made advances during and after the second century.

The situation of medical science was still different. The ancient physicians, to be sure, were capable of forming very fanciful theories; but medicine can never be entirely divorced from contact with people and facts. The physician, whether lecturing at Alexandria or serving with the army or attending the gladiators at Rome, based his work on the facts of human bodies, and their physical troubles, no matter how he might theorize on the humors of the body and other internal matters which could not be properly understood without a profound knowledge of physiology. This branch of science, too, made advances during the second century and after.

Perhaps we should do better to call the study of the law an intellectual activity rather than a science. The Romans had always pursued the law in a practical rather than an abstract spirit, even though the jurists were "gentlemen." They wrote few legal monographs, and spent little energy in devising general rules and abstract formulations. The basis of all their work was the careful discussion of individual cases, and from this evolved a truly great system of managing the relation of the individual to the community and of adjusting conflicts of interest between individuals.

The Roman jurist of the Republic was an aristocrat who had decided to devote himself to the law as his service to the state. Since like all Roman senators he must have had a fortune that freed him from gainful occupation, he could afford to occupy himself with study and discussion of the law and make himself available to all those—most often the orators who appeared in the courts—who sought him out to ask his opinion on the law.

Obviously a line of study pursued by Roman aristocrats in a severely practical spirit could not be subject to the limits imposed on some other studies by the prejudices of the age. No area of human activity had been marked off as too vulgar for the student of the law to consider; no striving toward philosophical generalization had ever caused the jurist to raise his eyes from the facts to gaze raptly at the heavens. Roman law reached its peak in the time of Hadrian; by then the details of the legal system had been so beautifully worked out that merely to consider the system is a great intellectual pleasure for a professional who can appreciate its excellence.

The discontinuity of the several intellectual activities which we have discussed—the fact that they were governed by different factors and were at differing stages of advancement—is emphasized by the fact that Roman legal science did not fully master its technical difficulties until the second century of our era. But Roman art had absorbed its Greek heritage and had become fully capable of independent expression by the time of Augustus. Roman literature, although produced by a type of man entirely different from the artists, arrived slightly before that time at the mastery of verse technique and poetic expression in Latin which gave it independence. These activities did not form a continuum which can be studied as one; they were not parts of an organic whole. They must be separately considered, since each was staffed by a different type of man and subject to different causations.

## V *Some Questions About the Rise of Christianity*

THOUGH religious life in the first and second centuries was slowly and uneventfully evolving, much religious activity was as it had been for centuries. Clever magicians could make a living selling charms to ward off spirits or to eliminate one's rival in love. Astrologers supported themselves by selling horoscopes and advice, some living in luxury and some in hovels up alleys. In the country communities there were still rites to purify the fields, wreaths were hung on the crude statues of the rustic deities, and the bowl of milk was left in the chimney corner for "the little people." In Rome the priests of the state cults of the old gods still trudged manfully through the precise and wearisome round of ritual. Judaism was still a strong and vital religion in spite of the destruction of Jerusalem, the center of the religious and national life of the Jews, in 70 A.D. The philosophers were still relying on pure reason to find the path to ultimate reality and the good life.

Many of the old local gods were gradually equated with the Greco-Roman gods by the process known as religious syncretism. The worshipers of the Punic goddess Tanit, the Queen of Heaven, had come to feel that Tanit must be the same goddess as the Greco-Roman Juno, so that the worship of the two tended to merge and the goddess became known as Dea Caelestis, "the heavenly goddess." The local Baals of the Semites about which we read in the Old Testament often came to be identified with the

Greco-Roman Jupiter and would take on such names as Jupiter Dolichenus. Isis, who had long been worshiped in Egypt as the Queen of Sorrows, entered into many such combinations, while the Persian god Mithras resisted them.

The idea and the experience of direct revelation existed both before and after the Christian revelation. Indeed, it is hard to see how the Christian revelation could have made any impression at all upon a world to which the idea was utterly foreign and unintelligible. Not only had the idea of God's speaking directly to man been current among the Jews of Old Testament days, but even the Greeks, in spite of their emphasis on the intellect, were familiar with the idea and receptive to it. After the beginnings of Christianity, as before, announcement of non-Christian revelations continued and found sympathetic ears.

Certain scholars have supposed that some new tendency must have appeared in the life of the first and second centuries in order to account for the rise of Christianity. There is not the least need of postulating such a new tendency unless one adheres to the outworn idea that all Greeks were emotionless men of crystal-clear intellect and all Romans were hard and soulless materialists—and unless one forgets the emotional religious life of the other peoples of the Empire. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that in the second century there was a great failure of nerve—a loss of courage and energy—which disposed men to accept the more emotional religions from the East, religions which would not have won their allegiance earlier.

The chief evidence for this theory is found in the fact that during the second century dedications to eastern gods were made in the western provinces, especially Gaul. For example, we find a stone inscribed "To Mithras," with the name of the worshiper. But the fact is that the worshipers traveled, rather than the religions. In the more cosmopolitan life of the second century men from Asia Minor and Palestine and Egypt found themselves in the West as soldiers or traders. Naturally they continued to adhere

to their old gods, and some of their religious meeting places and stone inscriptions have survived to modern times.

In any case, the devotees of the eastern gods were not necessarily dreamy mystics of an inferior fiber. They were good businessmen and traders and soldiers and administrators. The unhappy experiences of eastern armies with the Roman armies of republican times had been due to the inferiority of eastern discipline and tactics rather than to the inferiority of the individual soldier.

There is another and more subtle way of searching for new conditions which could have encouraged the rise of Christianity. People whose accustomed circumstances are violently changed may turn to new religions. If an old pattern of living is broken down by strong military or economic forces, the traditional religion, which is closely linked to the old order, may lose its appeal, and a new form of religion may fill the vacuum. Toynbee even suggests that a spiritual vacuum was created in the second century by the cessation of the old animosities toward Rome created by the Roman conquests, animosities which had long been an integral part of men's thinking.

But the changes which occurred in the second century were not of the type to leave a vacuum which would be filled by a new religion. As the life of the Empire changed, it changed not toward disorder and confusion, but toward the new pattern of Roman living and enthusiasm for the Empire which the Imperial administration was shrewdly, but not forcibly, fostering. Men did not find themselves standing among the ruins of their old lives and wondering where to make a start on building up a new life, but were drawn gradually from the old life toward a new Romanized way of life.

Yet two features of the life of the early Empire were to a limited degree favorable to the rise of Christianity. On the purely social side, the life of the urban centers of Asia Minor was very favorable soil for the Christian seed. City life tends to be

anonymous and impersonal. The ordinary poor man is divorced from the soil and dependent on an employer. Most of the conditions which can give a solid and satisfactory way of life are absent. These were people who might find some amelioration of their state in religious life, and it was this social environment that made Asia Minor an important center of first- and second-century Christianity. However, this was no new condition; the urban centers of Asia Minor had existed for centuries.

The state of contemporary philosophy was also favorable to Christianity. The problems of philosophy are essentially those of religion. Some of the chief problems, theologically phrased, are the existence of God, the unity of God, divine providence, the creation of the world, the existence of incorporeal principles, and the revelation to men of those principles. By the second century of our era the various schools of philosophy had come near to arguing each other to a standstill. Centuries of discussion had explored every line of thought. Each school of philosophy had learned to exploit every weakness of the rival schools and did so with all the art of both rapier and bludgeon. Men trained in philosophy, but discouraged by its inconclusiveness, had only a narrow gulf to cross to become Christians: the gulf one crosses to achieve faith. In modern times this has often seemed to be a very wide gulf indeed, especially in the first flush of promise of natural science, when it was thought that every last mystery of man and the universe might be solved by strictly rational methods. The decline of philosophical training, which has gone hand in hand with the rise of science, has also done much to make modern man think that there are fewer points of contact between ordinary thinking and religious thinking. To the ancients philosophical thought and religious thought seemed very closely connected.

But if there was no new historical factor which would have brought the rise of a new religion at this time rather than an-

other, we must ask the question: why did Christianity advance steadily? The answer is that it met religious needs well.

Christianity combined the strengths of the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans. From the Jews it took not only monotheism, but also the idea of making religion into a complete way of life, of boldly standing apart as a united group. The subtlety and keen intellect of the Greeks developed the theology of Christianity into a complete system which could satisfy the most exigent intellectual. The application of the principles of philosophy to Christianity provided a set of answers to basic philosophical questions which attracted many a man who had vainly gone the round of the philosophical schools in search of a way of life. The higher statesmanship of the early Church was Roman. The congregations early learned to keep in touch with one another. Gradually a well-integrated chain of authority was worked out, enabling the Christians of a whole province or of the whole Empire to work together and to stand together in crises. The consciousness of belonging to a well-knit organization of Empire-wide scope lent strength to its members.

The statesmanship of the early Church showed itself off very well in its handling of the basic problem of fixing a normative form of belief and practice. Any successful religious movement must flow strong and deep in a main channel, not dissipate itself in minor streams which trickle off across the meadows on either side. Long before this time the Jews had found it necessary to fix a normative form of their religion so as to avoid a variety of doctrines which might have wasted the strength of Judaism. The Christians recognized the problem and solved it by the establishment of a canon of sacred books. On the positive side, the authority of the Old and the New Testament gave Christians a rallying point, an official statement of the history and the nature of their faith. On the negative side it could be used as an impersonal and official means of discouraging individuals who felt that the Holy Spirit had come upon them and who wished to offer further

revelations which would have introduced an unfruitful diversity into Christianity.

The gradual establishment of bishops and the strengthening of their authority also served to encourage orthodoxy. Not only was it useful to have competent administrators everywhere, but these men could also use their authority to keep their flocks in the main current of faith and doctrine.

One of the great books of the second century, *Against the Heresies*, by Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons, gives us some idea of the variant forms of Christianity with which the Church had to contend. Irenaeus fought chiefly against a group of doctrines known as Gnosticism. These were essentially pagan doctrines of a consortium of gods (for instance, a father, mother, and son group), with Christ rather incongruously fitted into the system. The struggle with Gnosticism was typical of the doctrinal difficulties faced by the Church Fathers. Although the idea of a redeemer of mankind was neither new nor unacceptable to the pagan world, the Church had great difficulty in persuading men to accept the revelation of God's purposes through Christ as an entirely new dispensation which was to supersede all pagan religion and begin a new order.

The Gnostics were rejected by the majority of Christians during the second century, but they continued to exist for a good many centuries as a loosely-organized group. Other groups who were branded as heretics also continued active for many centuries. The apparent inconsistency between the jealous and vengeful God of the early Old Testament and the God of love and mercy of the New Testament troubled the minds of many and gave rise to the heretical view of Marcion that the Christian God was not the Jewish God. Another heresy, that of the Donatists, arose from the question whether the clergy derive an unchangeable authority from ordination or can forfeit it by failure in their duty. The question of the nature of the Trinity, which was endlessly debated in the fourth century, was the most famous of these early doctrinal dis-

putes. By this time the Empire was officially Christian, and the Arian party, who were the losers in the dispute, were finally suppressed by a considerable effort of the government.

The Church was not always successful in keeping small groups from partly seceding to nourish their own brand of doctrine; but it did succeed far enough to keep itself from lapsing into a division of belief which would fatally have weakened it. Far more important than all heresy and secession is that Christian statesmanship kept the main body of the faithful moving ahead in unity.

We have no sure way of knowing how many Christians there were by the end of the second century. We do know that their congregations were to be found in most parts of the Empire. If they could not claim any great percentage of the population as members, they could at least feel that they had made steady progress and that they had laid a firm foundation for further growth.

The manner of organization of Christianity explains why the Romans persecuted the Christians. The Imperial administration was carefully fostering a pattern of Roman living to help in the task of governing. The Christians boldly proclaimed a pattern of Christian living which rivaled and in some ways defied the Roman pattern.

In its early days Christianity was able to appeal to many people who could not be reached by the Roman way of life, notably the poor of the cities of Asia Minor. In the newer towns of the West the development of Roman institutions and of civic consciousness was an exhilarating change; but since the proletariat of the great eastern cities had little hope of any real status in their city community, they felt little enthusiasm for the world community.

The Christian community was small and intimate, with a promise of status for all. The new member could feel that his local community was part of a larger organization, the units of which constantly kept in touch with each other, forming a kind

of nation within an empire. Relying on the Christian revelation, he could feel that he was in good standing as a citizen of the universe and would in the fullness of time be received into the blessed company of those for whom this standing had been finally sealed and guaranteed.

If such a rival organization had been willing to conform outwardly, it might have been left to go its way; but it was not willing. The Christians aroused animosity in their neighbors, just as the Jews had, by their habit of trying to stay to themselves and live in their own way. This is a sure path to unpopularity at any time, and was especially so at a time when the rest of the community was full of a new enthusiasm for another way of life. Christian unwillingness to concede the existence of other gods than their own led to the popular cry of "Atheists!" and finally the cry of "The Christians to the lions!"

But the Christians had to deal with the government as well as with the masses. Death was the penalty for those who refused to join in the ceremonies of worshiping the emperor which periodically reaffirmed men's loyalty to Roman society. The Christians, strong in their faith and taking their stand on the laws of their own commonwealth, refused to join in the ceremonies. The Roman governors were completely unable to understand such conduct, and were exasperated. They urged the Christians to carry out the ceremonies as a purely symbolic expression of loyalty to the society which made civilized life possible for them, keeping whatever mental reservations would satisfy their consciences. The Christians vainly tried to bridge the gulf of misunderstanding by explaining the nature of the law, higher than the Roman law, to which they owed obedience. The governors, in turn, urged that religious loyalty could not be betrayed by a purely formal expression of adherence to the Roman gods and emperor. Finally patience wore thin. "You must!" the governor said. "I will not!" the Christian replied.

The deaths of the martyrs form one of the most degrading

pages of human history. True, the Christians were guilty of a sort of treason to the established government. Yet the manner of their deaths was shamefully cruel, and the popular exultation at their sufferings was inhuman. Man's inhumanity to man never appears so clearly as when a group of people feels that someone is threatening the basis of the values by which the group lives. Fear dissolves the bonds of humanity and lets loose the ultimate cruelty.

The memorials addressed to some of the emperors by Christians, chiefly converted philosophers, attempt to resolve this conflict. Laboriously they explain the loftiness of Christian morality, the purity of Christian life, the compelling nature of the Christian revelation, and the good will of the Christians toward the Empire and its rulers. They all plead for fuller understanding of the nature of Christianity to replace the death penalty for being a Christian.

But no marshaling of arguments, no appeal to abstract justice can mend such a situation. Those who flout the principles which support a society will inevitably be resented and hated by the masses and will be punished by those responsible for the maintenance of the principles of the society.

Could the Romans have stamped out the Christians in the second century? It is possible that they could have done so, had they firmly and consistently sought out and eliminated all the leaders, made assembling for worship a criminal offense, and enforced the death penalty on all those who refused to perform the formal acts of loyalty. That they did not hound the Christians to extinction is all the more remarkable in view of the exacerbated nature of the sporadic persecutions which did occur. Perhaps the Romans failed to realize what possibilities for continued existence and growth the Church possessed. The better sort of people may well have recoiled from the base emotions which were unchained by the persecutions, and the masses may well have found it impossible to maintain such a pitch of emotion against people whose general behavior was admirable. Whatever the cause was, the

Romans were not persistent in their efforts to turn the Christians away from their religion. Christianity survived, and survived without making any significant compromises with the world.

Did Christianity in any way represent a decay of the ancient world? The answer is a decided "no."

The spread of Christianity was due only to the normal course of religious sentiment, helped by its splendid organization. Christianity was not for weaklings. The chief impression that one gets from studying its rise is that these were brave, constant people, energetic and tenacious and able to bear discipline. The Church was built, as Rome was, by long, devoted, and well-directed effort. There is no need to suppose that the average of self-reliance, of constancy, or of any other quality had to decline to make men susceptible to Christianity.

Actually the behavior of the Church did no harm to society. If the Christian refusal to worship the emperor detracted something from the unity of public sentiment, their contribution to the upholding of general morality more than compensated for this. The Christians avoided public office or army service; but in the second century there was no shortage of men for such tasks. In the fourth century, when Christianity became the official religion, the Church faced its new responsibilities and arranged for the participation of its members in necessary Imperial activities.

## VI *The Third Century:* *The Struggle to Maintain* *the Empire*

NO nation or empire has ever been able permanently to solve all the persistent problems of government. The most interesting feature of the third century is the contrast between the agonized struggles with the persistent problems in this century and the stately success of the men of the second century in dealing with the same problems.

The death of Marcus Aurelius, the last of the Five Good Emperors, marks the end of the successes of the second century. From that year, 180 A.D., the Empire was to go through a period of just over a hundred years in which the combination of increased pressure from the outside and the follies and mismanagement of the Romans themselves brought the great Imperial organization to the brink of ruin. As we look back, we can see that the accession of Diocletian in 284 was the beginning of a recovery. Therefore we shall treat the period from 180 to 284 A.D. as "the third century."

One striking aspect of the history of the period was the recurrence of the succession problem after the majestic series of the Five Good Emperors in the preceding century. The constant struggles for the throne had the effect of exacerbating all other problems of government.

Marcus Aurelius had brought the war with the central Germans almost to the point of conquering and absorbing them. When he died of the plague in 180, his son Commodus insisted that the war should be ended on terms which were not too greatly unfavorable to the Germans. Then he hurried back to Rome to enjoy life.

Commodus was a handsome and vigorous young man with a taste for every kind of pleasure. By day he would appear in the arena to display his skill in shooting wild animals which dazzled and delighted the common people, somewhat as if the President of the United States were to play a slashing shortstop for the Washington baseball team in its home games. By night he flitted from one to another of the gazelle-eyed, bell-voiced houris with whom he had filled one wing of the palace. He gave the high offices in Rome to favorites who apparently were commended to him by the deviousness of their characters. Yet he seems to have had a mystic strain in him and a curious sense of connection with the divine which pleased the common people as much as did his athletic feats. The outraged Senate opposed him, with the result that many of them fell to his wrath.

A violent end to such a reign was almost inevitable. In 192 he was murdered. His successor was Helvius Pertinax, a mature and experienced man who was elevated to the throne by the praetorian guard, the elite corps of soldiers of good Italian families which was permanently stationed in the capital. The new emperor gave a handsome present to each member of the guard and settled down to put the government in order. He lasted only a few months, for his attempt to reform the guard itself brought about his murder by the guard.

The next emperor was a very rich man named Didius Julianus. Learning that another man was negotiating with the guard for the throne, he went to the camp of the guard, climbed a ladder, and leaned over the wall to outbid his rival in the amount of the present offered to each guardsman.

The provincial armies now avenged the outraged dignity of the

Empire. The three great armies of the Rhine line, the Danube line, and the East all set up their candidates and fought until the Danube commander, Septimius Severus, was established as emperor in 193.

Some historians have called Septimius Severus a rough soldier, because he improved conditions for the troops and was disregardful of the old prerogatives of the Senate. Actually he was the product of the usual Roman career of civil and military offices, but a more able man than most, and he was ready to advance the great second-century principle of reducing the special privileges of Italy and the Senate in the interests of a strong commonwealth government. He was capable of ruthless cruelty, but hardly beyond what the Romans already knew in that line. Like Vespasian, who also had risen to the throne by sure-handed fishing in waters troubled by the succession problem, he believed that the times required the firm establishment of a dynasty and was resolved to have his sons succeed him.

Historians have also asserted that he favored the African provinces because of his African birth. He was born at Lepcis, the ruins of which can still be seen on the seacoast near Tripoli. The facts show that he did not so much favor the African provinces as continue a long series of moves by the government to recognize the energetic self-Romanization of the Africans and to fill in the gaps in their defenses. Even in the troubled third century we do not generally find the emperors putting their personal preferences before their public duty, often as men allowed their ambition to lead them to aim illegally at the throne. And if an occasional emperor, such as Commodus, became lost in the pursuit of pleasure, the machinery of government in the provinces still rumbled on.

Thus when we re-examine the so-called favors granted to the African provinces by Septimius Severus, we find that his administration was merely going on with salutary policies which had been steadily pursued even while Commodus was busy driving

chariots and shooting lions. Towns had been raised to a new status when they were ready for it, roads had been built where they were needed, and a steady hand had been kept on border areas where the wild hillmen were not yet ready to give up their tribal life for the Roman name, the regular payment of taxes, and towns with forums, temples, and handsome stone latrines.

Under Severus these tasks continued to be discharged. The new note was an acceleration of the leveling of privilege in the Empire. He continued the extension of the right to public service downward, rather than merely outward to the provinces as before. Men of lower status than before might now hope to enter the civil or the military service. Their advancement was not barred in the higher reaches, so that it was theoretically possible for a free provincial of ordinary status to rise by degrees to the throne itself. In the year after Severus' death (which came in the year 211) an edict in the name of his son Caracalla was to extend the Roman citizenship to all free men resident in the Empire, thus completing in a legal sense the process which had changed Rome from an empire dominated by Italy to a commonwealth.

Severus' two sons succeeded him. Soon after his death the elder, Caracalla, murdered his brother on trumped-up charges of plotting to get the throne for himself alone. Caracalla was sole ruler until the year 217. He was a tyrannous and dissolute man, but not without administrative ability.

The manner of his death and the behavior of his immediate successors introduce a new note of fantasy to Roman history. Caracalla was heading an expedition against the Parthians when a fashionable astrologer, pottering about among the arcana of his trade, suddenly realized that the stars in their courses foretold the imminent death of the emperor at the hands of Macrinus, a high official in his train.

As the message warning the emperor made its way up through official channels, it was intercepted by Macrinus himself. Here was a dilemma for the servant of a jealous and implacable prince!

The delivery of the message to Caracalla meant almost certain death for Macrinus. Macrinus made a swift decision; he somehow persuaded a soldier to murder the emperor himself, and the hapless assassin was killed almost instantly by the emperor's body-guard. Macrinus, feigning grief for his dead master, was saluted as emperor by the soldiery and accepted by the Senate, despite the fact that he was the first of the emperors who was not of senatorial rank.

Unfortunately for Macrinus, some of the survivors of Caracalla's family were unwilling to abandon their claim to the throne. Caracalla's cousin Julia Soaemias proclaimed that her son Bassianus was the natural son of the late emperor and as such had the best hereditary right to the throne. Agents were sent to the army by the boy's forceful grandmother, Julia Maesa, with the result that Macrinus was deposed by the soldiers in favor of Bassianus, and Bassianus was accepted by the Senate.

This youngster fairly earned the title of the worst of the Roman emperors during his reign of four years, from 218 to 222. Before his elevation to the throne he had been hereditary high priest of the local Baal in the town of Emesa, in Syria, and he was deeply devoted to the cult of this god, which represented the worst type of Oriental orgiastic religion. Bassianus is generally known by the god's name, Elagabalus or Heliogabalus. He proceeded to make the cult, which was hostile to everything for which Rome had stood, the official religion of the Romans. In the service of the god he practiced every kind of excess from the religious to the gastronomic to the sexual. Being without any ordinary sense of honor or of political or social responsibility, he appointed his officers on the basis of their moral depravity and persecuted honorable men in every way that he could devise.

Apparently the people of Rome and the army were willing to endure this degradation of Roman dignity, since Elagabalus made the public money flow freely. His grandmother Julia Maesa, however, foreseeing the inevitable end of such a career and fearing the

extinction of the Severan line when he should pay his debt to the outraged majesty of the Roman name, persuaded him to adopt another of her grandchildren, his cousin Alexander Severus, as his colleague. This move, she argued, would leave Elagabalus more time for his religious duties. Before long, after more intriguing by Julia Maesa and the mother of Alexander, Alexander was recognized as sole ruler.

He was a nice boy of fourteen who showed no trace of the perverted ideas of Elagabalus. The family seems to have split down the middle; Elagabalus and his mother had resisted Romanization, while Alexander, his mother, and his grandmother had gone over to the Roman camp. Alexander's grandmother and his mother were not Roman matrons in the strictest sense, since they came of a Syrian family of devotees of a wild emotional cult; yet, when judged by their works as the powers behind his throne, they fully deserve to be called Roman matrons, for we are now in the age when Roman is as Roman does.

From 222 to 235 this strange team of grandmother, mother, and son gave the Empire a fairly good government. The Senate was paid all possible respect, considering that earlier regimes had almost removed its power. Good appointments to the higher offices were made, and the work of the civil service throughout the Empire went on with the usual efficiency. In the time of Augustus the poet Horace had epitomized the effect of Greek culture on the conquering Romans with the famous statement that "captive Greece made captive her rude conqueror." Now a Syrian family had captured the throne of the Roman Empire and had in turn been captured by the majesty of Rome. The day of the old Roman was past, yielding to the day of the new Rome in which all members of the Mediterranean world were Romans.

The latter part of our period, from the death of Alexander in 235 to the accession of Diocletian in 284, is sometimes known as the military anarchy. It was indeed a distressed period; but, if we are to continue our attempt to describe events without prejudice

and to understand the reasons for the changes which occurred, we must avoid such extreme words as "anarchy." That word should be reserved to mean the absence of effective government, which was not the case from 235 to 284.

The army was responsible for the unseating and death of Alexander. Earlier in his reign he had shown himself somewhat less than competent in attempting to conduct a war in the East. Now he and his mother went to the German frontier, where the enemy had broken through defenses weakened by the withdrawal of troops for the eastern war. He began his campaign by attempting to purchase the withdrawal of the invaders. This so inflamed the soldiers, who had already begun to regard him as a coward, that they murdered him and his mother.

Macrinus had been the first emperor not to belong to the senatorial order. Now we have a man as emperor who was not a senator, who had risen from the ranks, who had never even been in Rome, and who was destined never to see Rome. He was Maximinus, a Thracian peasant of great size and energy. He was an able commander, as he proved at once by defeating and expelling the German invaders before whom Alexander had shown himself irresolute.

Maximinus was typical of the emperors who ruled between 235 and 284. They were chiefly soldiers rather than men trained in the old style by a succession of civil and military posts. Some of them, however, had risen to membership in the Senate before they ascended the throne, and not all of them were uneducated boors, as he was, without any knowledge at all of the ordinary problems of civil administration.

These men were inspired by the same aims which had motivated Septimius Severus. They brought to a logical conclusion the second-century idea of a commonwealth. To them the Empire was one, with no room in it for the former privilege of Italy and the senatorial order. Many of them were men of great energy and ability; most of them were men of strong, even fierce, love of

country. Their country, however, was the new commonwealth, not the old Empire.

The senatorial order was not minded to accept this new type of emperor without a struggle. Senatorial officers in the army plotted against Maximinus, but without success. He retaliated by open warfare against the Senate, ordering confiscation of senators' property and dismissing senators from posts in the army. Finally, in 238, a revolt was proclaimed in Africa and an old senator, Gordian, named as emperor. The revolt, having no soldiers to support it, was crushed almost instantly by the local troops.

This event stirred the Senate to its last manifestation of energy or power. It named a pair of emperors and gathered all its forces to support them. When Maximinus came to Italy to put down this revolt of the Senate, he was defeated and killed in North Italy. However, the soldiers soon became restless and murdered the two emperors, then set up the young grandson of Gordian, also named Gordian, as their choice.

About the year 227 the Parthian Empire, Rome's old enemy in Asia, had a change of dynasties. The throne was captured by an able king of Persia. From now until the great movement of Islam in the seventh century we speak of the Persian or the New Persian Empire. The territory and the people were the same, but a new aggressive spirit replaced the old concept of coexistence with the Romans (enlivened, to be sure, by a minor war now and then).

Alexander had fought a brief and inconclusive war with the Persians in 231 and 232. In 242 the boy-emperor Gordian set out for the East to meet a new Persian threat. He was accompanied by Philip, one of his civil officials, an ambitious and unscrupulous man who had just gained his high office. Philip at once began intrigues with the soldiers which led to the murder of Gordian and his own elevation to the throne.

Philip was an Arab by birth. To some historians this fact is the measure of the depths to which Rome had fallen. From an-

other point of view it is a measure of the success which Rome had had in making Romans out of men of the most diverse origins. Philip's family seems to have reached equestrian rank. He himself reached his office of praetorian prefect by able performance in the civil service. As emperor he showed himself a good administrator.

His death was as typical of the times as his life. He had made a peace with the Persians which was more sensible than glorious. At the news of a great invasion along the Danube, Philip, knowing that he was no military genius, was almost in despair. Decius, one of his generals, stirred him to resistance and himself successfully led the army against the invaders, aided by a bit of the old Roman luck which naturally was less frequent in these days when Rome was so often on the defensive. The soldiers of the Danube army, elated at their general's feat and jealous of the army of the East, which had made Philip emperor, proclaimed Decius emperor and defeated the home troops in another senseless civil conflict.

Here the Empire reached its lowest point. In the thirty-odd years until the accession of Diocletian the Empire suffered fierce attacks by foreign enemies, repeated attempts at usurpation of the throne, and the temporary loss of large blocks of territory in both East and West. Yet it was not a time of genuine anarchy. There was a recognized central government which pursued definite and sensible policies. The civil service tried to perform its proper tasks. Even where pretenders to the throne managed to maintain themselves in power for a year or two at a time in small parts of the Empire, they did conduct something like orderly government.

Decius had a broad policy of reconstruction which he attempted to put into effect at once. His aim was to restore the government to full efficiency and to revive morale and public spirit. His persecution of the Christians, the first full-scale persecution, was motivated by his feeling that they were undermining the Roman spirit.

He was destined to have only a short time in which to work. In 251 a new invasion of the Goths called him to the Danube frontier.

The Goths were a new Germanic enemy, sent from their Scandinavian home perhaps by a stiffening of the climate, perhaps by that restlessness which so often attacked the Germanic peoples. Since the year 238 they had been surging at the Roman barrier of the Danube, and they were to be formidable participants in the events of the next couple of centuries. On this occasion they inflicted a costly defeat on the Romans in which Decius lost his life. He was the first of the emperors to die in battle.

After the death of Decius there was a contest between the candidates of the armies much like the contests which brought the throne to Vespasian in 69 A.D. and Septimius Severus in 193 A.D. There were more such contests during the next three decades. The modern writer of Roman history generally contents himself with naming the winner, since there is little significance in the details. This time the winner was Valerian, who was established on the throne in 253.

Valerian had a grown son, Gallienus, whom he made his colleague. Gallienus, who was the stronger of the two, deserves more credit than has been given him for his ability and tenacity. From 253 to 268 he maintained himself on the throne and kept things going after a fashion, in spite of repeated attacks by foreign enemies and repeated attempts at usurpation. He has been accused, on the basis of one cynical remark he made toward the end of his reign, of giving up the struggle. This accusation does not do justice to his great efforts and the great difficulties of his task.

First he went to Gaul, where he showed his ability as a soldier in repelling a new Germanic invasion by the Franks and Alamanni. But when he and some of his troops were called to the Danube to deal with a pretender there, the enemy broke into Gaul and inflicted more damage than the province had ever suffered before. One group of them made their way to Spain and even across the strait to Mauretania (Morocco).

In desperation the soldiers and people of Gaul proclaimed the commander there, Postumus, as emperor and tried to reorganize

for their own defense. The new Gallic government maintained itself both against the central government and the barbarians until in 273 the emperor Aurelian brought it back into the fold.

In the East there was a similar temporary loss of territory, which also was to be recovered by Aurelian. Valerian, the father of Gallienus, went out to meet a new Persian attack. In 260 he was captured by the Persians and died later in captivity. Odenathus of Palmyra, a caravan city near the Persian border, rallied the Roman forces against the Persians and soon made himself ruler of the whole region. Like Postumus in Gaul, he was supported by the soldiers and by local sentiment. People decided to trust in him and in themselves because they saw no hope of help from the center of the Empire. Although he acknowledged the suzerainty of Rome, he in fact ruled a large block of territory, which presently included Egypt. Gallienus, beset by almost continuous attempts at usurpation and by new onslaughts of the northern barbarians, was doing all that could be expected by holding Italy, Africa, and the Danube region.

The Romans were their own enemies in those dreary days, but we cannot use the pat phrase, "their own *worst* enemies." Other enemies were worse—the Persians, the old barbarian enemies and the new hordes of Goths, and, perhaps worst of all, the awful visitation of the plague, which raged through the Empire from 250 to 265. The Romans, who could well have used a greatly increased population to man the lands which they held, were sorely smitten by the losses of the plague.

In 268 Gallienus was murdered by a conspiracy of his generals. Their motives remain a mystery, although it has been conjectured that as soldiers and men of no great culture they resented his finding time amid all his duties to encourage a minor renaissance of the arts. The conspirators were able men, who had fought faithfully and well up to the time of their plot and who began, slowly and painfully, the rehabilitation of the Empire from its desperate condition.

Claudius, one of the conspirators, ruled from 268 to 270, dying of the plague after contributing some solid military victories. Aurelian (270-275) recovered Gaul with hardly a struggle and defeated the tenacious Zenobia of Palmyra, the widow of that Odenathus who had stepped into the breach when Valerian was captured by the Persians. Aurelian might have become one of the greatest of the emperors. It was pure bad luck for the Empire that after five years of brilliant accomplishments he was murdered because a dishonest secretary feared discovery and punishment. His successor, Probus, was another stern soldier and able administrator. He was murdered by soldiers who were not yet ready to endure a return to the old Roman discipline.

These soldier-emperors turned the tide. They recovered the lost territories in both East and West, with the exception of Dacia, which lay in an exposed position north of the Danube and along the Black Sea. They beat off numerous barbarian attacks. They made a good start on restoring discipline in the army and restored morale in general. After one more brief period of disorder, Diocletian became emperor in 284. He was to inaugurate a long period of recovery and relative prosperity.

## VII *Changes During the Third Century*

THE Romans of the third century were afflicted with two major contingent misfortunes, arising from no fault of theirs, from nothing that they had done or left undone. The first was the arrival of the new Germanic peoples from the far north, who had as yet been unable to find a *modus vivendi* with the Romans and who found no land readily available for them in these more tempting southern regions except within the Empire. The other was the terrible onset of the plague. We must also, to be fair, accuse the emperors of the third century of almost criminal mismanagement.

The third century, considered by itself, might well seem a time of almost meaningless confusion. The period acquires more meaning if we try to determine why the Empire was managed so much less successfully at this time than in the second century, and if we try to follow the changes which led to the conditions of the fourth century, the eve of the decisive troubles. Making use of the support of the people, the emperors gained in power during the second century at the expense of the Senate. They received enthusiastic support from the provinces because they had given a new dignity to the provincials. This movement toward greater power for the emperor was brusquely accelerated under Septimius Severus, who reigned from 193 to 211 A.D., at the beginning of what we have called the third century.

Historians of this period refer again and again to the relation between the emperor and the Senate in the attempt to explain the striking contrast between the great power and prestige of the Senate during republican times and its eventual position of being a nobility with almost no practical power as a body, but still with great prestige.

Septimius Severus, with the support of the army, which he claimed represented the people, was able to encroach on the traditional activities of the Senate, which had no effective power to oppose to him. At his accession he did not ask the Senate to confer the throne on him, but bade it ratify his elevation by the army. Hitherto the theory had been that the Senate conferred power on the emperor. Now Severus asserted in effect that the power flowed directly from the people to the emperor. Thereafter he did not submit his proposed measures to the Senate, presenting it instead with announcements of what he intended to do.

It is curious to note that during the reign of Alexander Severus (222-235), when the young prince of Syrian ancestry was constantly advised by his Syrian mother and grandmother, the Senate was treated with great respect, although it would be a mistake to suppose that any of its powers were restored. Maximinus, the crude and vigorous Thracian peasant whom the army put forward to succeed Alexander, carried on a struggle with the Senate, which tried in every way to oppose him, and provoked it at last to its final attempt to assert the power of creating emperors. The attempt failed because the Senate had not sufficient military power to oppose the emperor and the army.

Although lacking in practical power, the Senate still had influence and prestige. Many of its members had inherited their rank; but there was a constant recruitment of able men who had attracted favorable attention by sound performance in the equestrian order and in middle age had been adlected, as the term was, into the Senate by the emperor on the basis of their ability. Thus this nobility somewhat resembled that of England, some of whose

members are of old noble families, while many owe their recent elevation to their own ability and public service.

Such a group of men can exercise considerable influence as the result of the experience and achievements of its members. Membership in the group represents the formal recognition of ability, so membership confers prestige. Since many of the senators came from the provinces, the senatorial order could also claim to represent public opinion throughout the Empire. Knowledge of local conditions and sentiment flowed through it to the center of government, whence in turn some knowledge of the needs and problems of the whole flowed back to the parts. Although many of the senators did not live in Rome and rarely went there, their communication with the government was no less effective. Each province had a council, which served as a vehicle for the more formal expression of such communication. At Rome the emperor had his own council of senators and leading jurists; he was glad to use the ability of some senators even while he opposed their corporate pretension to be an organ of government equal to himself.

Thus the power of the emperor, supported by the people, was such that he could count on prevailing over the Senate in any general test of strength, but the senators were by no means a negligible force. Senators holding high army commands could occasionally cause real trouble by claiming the throne. Gallienus, whose reign (253-268) was the high point of such troubles and the low point of governmental authority, felt himself obliged to oust senators from their posts as commanders of armies, thus denying them the practical support which had made such attempts possible. No matter how able the equestrians might be who replaced them, there apparently was no fear of their aiming at the throne without the prestige conferred by senatorial rank. If a man rose from the ranks to the throne, he would normally win senatorial status on the way; Macrinus and Maximinus were exceptions to this rule. Challenges to the authority of the government in the

third century did not come, in general, in the form of attempts to restore the lost powers of the Senate, but as attempts by individual members of the Senate to usurp the throne.

Such power as the usurpers and the would-be usurpers were able to wield was gathered from various sources. Some of them were supported by parts of the army which merely hoped to be rewarded in money for having put a personally ambitious commander on the throne. There were other cases in which soldiers and officers alike must have felt that the inadequacy of the emperor as a commander was preventing them from doing their work, as when Alexander Severus hesitated to meet the Germans in the field. In other instances a pretender to the purple was recognized both by the soldiers and by the population of a part of the Empire which felt that it was not being properly cared for by the central government. The local governments of Postumus in Gaul and of Odenathus and his wife Zenobia in the East apparently could command the support of a population which felt that it needed strong local leadership for its own preservation. Other pretenders who maintained themselves for lesser periods of time doubtless had the same kind of support. Had this tendency of the most troubled years not been checked by the great Aurelian, the Empire must inevitably have fallen apart.

During this century the first two problems, that of maintaining the authority of the government and that of regulating the succession, were so closely linked that they were practically one. Had it been possible to establish the succession to the throne so securely that no one would have thought of attempting to disturb it, the struggles with the pretenders would have been avoided, and it may well be that the tendency of regions to break off and go it alone would not have arisen, because the absence of civil wars would have made the central government much stronger to defend the realm adequately.

Naturally the third problem, that of finance, was a very difficult one in this century of frequent civil and foreign war. The wars

caused great economic loss. The men who were killed could not well be spared. Cities and towns and farm buildings were destroyed; orchards and vineyards were cut down. People and goods were carried off as loot. The revenue of any region temporarily held by foreign enemies was lost to the government, as was that of any region which was devastated by a raid.

The Germanic raids of the third century in Gaul were the most destructive of any which Gaul suffered. The Germans seemed to take a childish pleasure in pure destruction. The same destructiveness marked the Gothic raids on the Danube and in the region of the Black Sea. The Goths not only looted and destroyed, but also were able sometimes to exact cash payments from the Romans as the price of withdrawing or abstaining from further raids.

One factor mitigating the loss of money to these troublesome neighbors of the Empire is often overlooked. A good part of the money was likely to come back in the way of trade. Archeological discoveries have shown that goods were exported to the barbarian regions—a magnificent service of silver, for example, was found at Hildesheim, in Germany—while the ancient writers make stray remarks which show that in the intervals between warfare, which sometimes were fairly long, the Roman merchants carried on a steady trade with the people on the boundaries of the Empire, and even some distance beyond the boundaries.

Naturally the economic pressures of the government upon the people were increased at such a trying time. Those pressures were exerted chiefly in two ways which seem strange to us, but were characteristic of the Roman economy: the government made new demands on the aristocracies of the towns all over the Empire and on the people concerned with supplying such basic necessities as food.

A list, called the *album*, was kept of the leading citizens of every town in the Empire, and they were known as the *curiales*, or town councilors. The *curiales* were expected to take turns year by year in serving on the town council. It had long been the

custom among the Greeks and Romans that the more prosperous people in a locality should bear the burden of certain public needs for the benefit of their fellow citizens. The *curiales* managed the administration, kept up roads and bridges, provided festal entertainments, and even performed such duties as providing for the heating of the public baths. These tasks were known as *munera*, or duties.

A good many legal enactments of the Imperial government, by which the government clarified all the legal aspects of the *munera*, have been preserved, most of them dating from the second century. Although in the second century men accepted such responsibilities with pleasure and were glad to perform them generously, we still can see that they were no small matter and that the government was resolved that these small units of the Imperial system should be kept strictly up to the mark.

From the time of Septimius Severus these *curiales*, or members of the local aristocracies, were increasingly forced to act as unpaid agents of the Imperial government in addition to their local duties. One of their chief tasks was the collection of the *annona*, the tax in kind exacted by the government. The idea of collecting taxes or tribute in kind was not a new one. We hear of payments made in the earlier days of the Empire in such quaint and interesting materials as incense, pepper, crimson dye, asafetida from Cyrene, or ivory from Mauretania. Severus increased taxation in kind, as against taxation paid in money—a logical move, for the government was thus able to receive directly certain materials which it needed. The wheat collected as taxes was used for provisioning the army and the idle mob of the city of Rome. Olive oil, another food of prime importance in those days, was also needed for the army and for the city of Rome.

A modern government would almost certainly recruit its own personnel for such a program and levy taxes to pay for it instead of forcing the well-to-do in each town to act as unpaid government agents. But both the Greeks and the Romans had always

thought it right that the wealthy should be forced to contribute money and effort for the benefit of their fellow citizens, so it was a natural extension of this principle to enlarge it to include tasks done for the government.

As the third century went on, these burdens weighed more and more heavily on the *curiales*. In the area where a civil war was being fought there were demands first from one army and then from the other, or looting by soldiers of one army or the other. Many a man, even in regions untouched by the actual fighting of foreign or civil war, must have been ruined by the demands of the government. Papyri from Egypt give a vivid picture of the despair which the group of *curiales* often felt as it met to consider the latest demands of the government.

The system was inexorable; the man who could not bear his share was ruined and must sell out his property. Many a man of comparatively small property must have had an unfair share of the *munera* forced upon him by his more powerful neighbors. Many must have found that in bad years they could not deliver the amount demanded of them. So they sold out and retired to a lower class as best they could, and one of the neighbors bought the land at a bargain, paid off the share of the *munera* or of the collection of the *annona*, and added still further to the stability of his own property by this addition to it. As one historian of the time remarks, such times of stress are useful to the more powerful and ruinous to the less powerful.

All this led directly to the economic conditions of the fourth century. The class of wealthy landowners became even wealthier; many of these landowners were of senatorial rank. There is some evidence that many of their holdings consisted of patchworks of small estates rather than solidly continuous large estates; this would have been the natural result of the pressures on small landowners in the third century.

The second way in which the government increased its pressures was by making heavier demands on the corporations. These

were not exactly like modern corporations, but were groups of men engaged in the same business, such as shipping or baking, or in the same craft, such as making weapons. Some historians refer to the groups engaged in crafts as gilds; either word, gild or corporation, is slightly misleading if one assumes that it has the same meaning as in medieval or modern times. Although the Imperial government frowned on private societies, even for purposes which to us seem spotlessly pure of subversive intentions, such as volunteer fire companies, even as early as the first century the emperors were trying to form state-supervised corporations to perform certain services.

Claudius' organization of the shippers in the first century of course had in view the provisioning of the capital. When the wheat of Africa and Egypt was ready, a good many ships were needed to carry it to Rome. If it were not carried promptly, the stormy autumn and winter seasons would intervene, and the populace of Rome might go hungry or (worse still) might become troublesome. In the second century Trajan organized the bakers of Rome to bake the state wheat so that it could be distributed to the people in the handy form of loaves. Later we hear of Commodus' reorganizing the grain fleet.

By the organization of corporations, the people in the shipping business or some other occupation were gathered into societies with the blessing of the government and assured of government contracts; they were not expected to give the government something for nothing, as the *curiales* had to give their services or those of their servants, although the government did not offer generous terms of payment. No collectivist theory of any sort underlay the arrangement; the government wished only to ensure the performance of certain vital services and the production of certain vital goods. The corporations had to agree to perform their job faithfully and at the right time. The shippers, for instance, could not turn aside from voyages for the government to pick up profitable deck cargoes which were offered them. On the whole the arrange-

ments must have seemed reasonably satisfactory to the business-men.

By the fourth century compulsion was being applied; men could not leave the corporations, nor could their heirs, and their landed property was surely for their performance. The change to compulsion probably took place late in the third century under the pressure of the disturbances then convulsing the state. It is too bad that we are not better informed about the way this change took place and that we have no contemporary discussion which would show what people thought of the change when it was being made.

From the political and social point of view the Roman attempt to unite the Mediterranean world in a commonwealth was a worthy idea. From the economic point of view it was a daring one. It may well be held that the economic resources of the ancient world could hardly support the sort of government, and especially the sort of army, which was needed to defend this large territory against its determined foreign adversaries. Moreover, it was an expensive business to support the city life which was characteristic of the Greco-Roman way and which fostered the high intellectual tradition of the ancients.

Some historians have hinted that perhaps the Empire was a mixed blessing for its people. Yet the Roman dynamism which built the Empire, even though we cannot credit it with complete foresight, did serve to protect that higher form of civilization which was the creation of the Greeks. If we are to affirm the sort of civilization which has been passed on to us, we must also affirm the action of the Romans in protecting it and fostering it long enough for us to have received it. Had the Empire fallen to the Gauls in the fourth century B.C. or to the Teutons and the Cimbri at the end of the first century B.C., it is possible that the Greek world of the time would have been unable to defend itself against the barbarians and that civilization would have relapsed to the level of the Germans or the Scythians—not utter barbarism,

but certainly an inferior form of civilization. The Romans made the effort and did carry on. The economic difficulty of doing so was great, and it is this difficulty which will explain much that we find regrettable in the system of the fourth century.

Defense against invasion, which was the heart of the fourth problem, that of foreign affairs, was intrinsically more difficult in the third century than in the second because of the greater pressures exerted by the Persians and the Goths. Persian and Gothic attacks and inroads naturally encouraged similar attempts by less formidable groups, such as the hill peoples of Algeria. Civil strife aggravated the difficulties, laying the Empire open to foreign invasion again and again.

The most practical thing would have been to separate the throne from the leadership of the army. There were plenty of good generals available. If it had been possible to establish the sanctity of the succession to the throne and to have had the monarch loyally served by both civil and military experts, all the problems of the time could have been more easily solved. The head of the state should not have been expected to be capable of commanding the army in the chief theater of war.

The history of this period clearly shows that the problem of fighting foreign enemies and the problem of managing the army are not one and the same problem. Recruiting armies, training them, supplying them, and leading them on the battlefield are all problems of foreign affairs, since the army is an instrument to be used in foreign affairs. Management of the army, the fifth of our persistent problems, means keeping the army from interfering with the succession to the throne or with any other matter which should be handled by the civil government.

The army of this period could fight. It repeatedly scored victories over strong adversaries. The legions of the Republic may well have been overrated by historians as compared to the fighting men of later days. The Italian was a brave and sturdy soldier, but there is no reason why he should have been more so than

the other men of the Empire, once they had been trained. The trouble with the soldiers of the third century was not that they were poorly led or could not fight, but that they did not confine themselves to fighting foreign enemies.

The natural difficulty of managing the army at such a time is obvious. Sometimes the men were tempted by the hope of gifts to support a usurper. Although their pay was increased two or three times during the century, they still were not well paid. Sometimes they rebelled because they wanted a commander who could lead them efficiently in their work, as when they got rid of Alexander Severus.

The soldiers of this time were less likely to be sent to serve away from their native countries than in preceding centuries. This partly explains their support of men like Postumus and Odenathus who were trying in difficult straits to defend their own region. A good many Germans were enrolled in the army, either as individuals or in groups. For now it is enough to say that the German soldiers of this period do not seem to have caused any trouble on the basis of their nationality.

The troubles which we have been discussing had much to do with one important change in the position of the emperor. The emperors of this period continued to gain in power at the expense of the Senate, and they began to base their power on divine right, thus preparing the way for the autocracy of the fourth century, which seems so different from the imperial power of the second century. The emperors of the second century seem by comparison almost like republican first citizens.

The idea of the divine right of kings, or, to put it differently, of divine support and protection of kings, was a very old one in Egypt and the East. Even in the second century we can occasionally see some trace of the idea in Rome. In the third century there was every need to gain all possible support for the position of the head of the state. That position was frequently threatened by ambitious men. It was also felt that the power of the emperors could be

commended to the masses of the people more effectively in this simple and time-honored way. Even in the first and second centuries many people of the Empire had insisted on regarding the emperors as kings divinely supported.

The coins of the period show a good many suggestions that the emperor had divine support. The emperor and a god might both appear on the coin, or the emperor might be portrayed with divine attributes, such as a halo. Inscribed on the coins are formulas which suggest divinity, like "Dedicated to the present power of our lord —," followed by the emperor's name. The sun god, who was thought of as a combination of all the powers of the pagan gods, was the favorite divinity in these inscriptions, and under Aurelian there was a definite adoption of the cult of the sun as the god who above all others supported the emperor and Rome. Public ceremonies and the formal dress worn by emperors also served to foster the concept of the divinity of the emperor. The way was prepared not only for the fourth-century autocratic power of the emperor, but also for Constantine's adoption of the God of the Christians as the divinity which protected and supported the Empire.

## VIII *Third-Century Culture: The Battle-Lines Are Drawn*

WE have no great work of *belles lettres* for the third century, whether in Latin or Greek. Literature would seem to have been in a bad way. However, we must be very careful in drawing conclusions from the failure of the men of this period to produce any enduring humanistic writing. We do know that education was more common than ever before and that there was a great deal of competent literary activity.

Professional oratory enjoyed great popularity and esteem in this century. The Greeks and Romans always loved fine speechmaking, not only the practical oratory of the law courts and deliberative bodies, but also the oratory of pure display, like the Fourth of July oratory of our time.

The age was something like our own in glorifying popular entertainers. The arrival of one of the leading orators in a town was an event like the arrival of a great actor or musician on tour in our country, in the days before radio and television. The content of the speech was likely to be rather thin. Perhaps he praised the city in which he found himself according to an elaborate set of formulas for the praise of cities. He might offer a literary theme, such as the discussion of a famous passage of Homer, which would show off his ingenuity in argument and his learning. These performances, like those of our own entertainers, often brought

rewards in fame and money quite out of proportion to their intrinsic value.

These orators often circulated written versions of their speeches. This enables us to know that they were highly expert in the technical handling of language. Moreover, the contents of the speeches show that there was an educational system which kept alive the old classics and which enabled audiences to appreciate fine and intricate points of oratorical technique. Although the speeches themselves are anything but great compared to those of Demosthenes or Cicero, they do enable us to realize that the age was one in which literary interests flourished widely and in which education of a literary sort was common.

By the third century Christian oratory was a fully-developed art. It could be used for the exposition of doctrine, for the praise of God, or for discussion of issues peculiar to the congregation. We have the scathing remarks which Tertullian of Carthage uttered on the subject of overdressed females in church. Apparently every Sunday was Easter Sunday for the fashionable ladies of Carthage, and they neglected no way in which art can improve upon Nature. We can imagine how they squirmed with a delectable mixture of pleasure and contrition as Tertullian called attention to the artifices with which they had adorned themselves for church.

But oratory was not the only literature of entertainment. The romance, or novel, flourished in this century. These tales, which are the purest "boy meets girl" kind of stories, often bear the name of the hero and the heroine as the title—*Daphnis and Chloe*, for instance. Not only are they the lineal ancestors of the modern novel and the stories of the cinema, but also by their great popularity they helped to inspire the Church to set up romanticized lives of the saints to compete with them.

As entertainment they are far from negligible. Boy meets girl, and we are off in a whirl of seething emotions, plots of jealous rivals, raids by brigands, partings and meetings, voyages punctuated by storms, wrecks, and pirate attacks, and finally the

clinch and fadeout. The heroine guards her chastity with a fierce insistence despite the fact that she is going through hair-raising adventures far from the supervision of her parents.

A much quieter kind of literature of entertainment was books about literature. More than one author wrote lives of the famous orators; such books may fairly be compared to biographies of leading figures in the entertainment industry of today. Athenaeus' *Doctors at Dinner* is another type still familiar to us. An imagined dinner party of learned men, which may be compared to a radio program of the conversation of a group of literary men, serves as the thread on which the author strings one piece after another of literary information and gossip, varied by details on food—useful subjects, then as now, for those who wished to be thought suave and cultivated.

Such books have little interest for the modern reader. They interest the specialist because they offer him many details from works now lost and information about the customs of the times. For us here their interest lies in the fact that they betray a continuing high level of literary education and interest, even in the absence of genius.

Most of the best literature of this period was written in Greek, although sometimes the authors were born and raised in the western part of the Empire, where Latin was the ordinary language. Yet there is evidence enough that Latin education flourished. We know that schools were widespread in the western part of the Empire, that the Latin classics were popular, and that the men who wrote in Latin could express themselves well. Some Latin speakers wrote in Greek for the same reason that led Gibbon to consider writing his *Decline* in French. To the end the high intellectual life of the ancient world was more Greek than Latin.

The historians of art are at odds about the art of this century, as they are about all late Roman art. Art historians such as Bernard Berenson adhere to the traditional view that both the artistic principles and the technique of the artists of the time were in de-

cay. But modern critics such as Emerson Swift and Rhys Carpenter believe that specific works of art which have been called inferior or decadent should be judged by standards other than those which the traditionalists apply to them. These critics say it is bad criticism to insist, as the traditionalists do, that all work in ancient art be judged by the standard of the best Greek art. New ideas and modes of apprehension were arising, they say, and there were new techniques to express them.

The opportunities for creating large buildings gave the third-century architects a field for study and experimentation. Such buildings as the great baths of Caracalla or Diocletian show plainly what the architects were doing. They worked out a new technique of domes and pendentives to roof over the huge structures, and developed an entirely new idea of interior space as an active element of composition. If you stop and look up in any large church or railroad station, you will realize that the modern architect, the heir of this tradition, has given great attention to the effect of the large empty space and the lighting entering from above—a concept which was quite foreign to the builders of Greek temples. Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople, represents the magnificent culmination of this movement in the sixth century.

In smaller works of art, too, new tendencies appear by the third century. The sculptors, probably borrowing from painting, developed a new technique of deep cutting which suggests light and shadow. Sculptors of reliefs developed a way of putting figures in successive planes to suggest depth, as perspective does in painting.

Although the new tendencies in art were not originated by the Christians, they answered Christian needs in art. The narrative (or comic-strip) style was admirably adapted to the portrayal of the miracles of Christ or to the depiction of the deeds of such Biblical characters as Noah or Jonah. The technique of successive planes in relief sculpture was useful for the well-peopled scenes which Christian

art liked to portray. When Christianity was legalized in the fourth century and it became possible to build elaborate and expensive churches, the techniques developed for building large structures could be used for these churches.

Historians of science do not regard the third century as a time of striking change. In this field, as in that of belles lettres, no towering figures appeared. Yet here, too, we can see that there was a continuing tradition of teaching and discussion and new work. Some work of better than mediocre quality did appear. The studies of the algebraist Diophantus, for instance, have offered stimulation even to modern mathematicians, as have the studies of the geometer Pappus. Scientific work of this quality does not arise in a vacuum, but in an environment where a good many men are working competently, if not brilliantly.

The most lively thought of the third century was that of the Christians. By this time many men thoroughly trained in Greek philosophy had become Christians. They naturally applied the acute methods of philosophy to their religious thinking. They also wished to present a thoroughly thought-out religious system to prospective converts and to hostile pagans. One of the questions which seemed most to require an answer was that of the relative roles of faith and of systematic demonstration in religious belief.

Tertullian of Carthage, the most fiery of the Christians, believed in the sufficiency of simple faith in the teaching of Scripture. "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" he asks, and assails philosophy as a snare for the Christian. He also attacks those who think of Christianity only as a kind of philosophy, which emphasizes the fact that then Christianity and philosophy were not as far apart as they may seem to us today. For Tertullian it was even harmful to attempt to find a rational basis for faith. Yet he himself was trained in philosophy, as we can see from his manner of arguing. Apparently he felt that a man might use philosophy if he had been trained in it before his conversion to Christianity.

This straightforward view did not prevail. Origen of Alexandria

argued carefully for the superiority of rational faith over simple faith. A reasoned belief, he said, is a firmer belief, is more worthy of God, and brings one nearer to God. Other theologians handled the question more subtly, drawing on philosophy for careful definitions of the nature of man's adherence to any belief and giving finally a genuinely philosophical definition of two kinds of faith, which they declared equal in merit. Faith might be either the acceptance of a doctrine without demonstration or as the result of a demonstration.

But there were more difficult matters to be clarified. The matter of the Trinity not only baffled the pagans, but was somewhat confusing even to the Christians themselves. How can One be Three and how can Three be One? If God is incapable of change, being perfect, how could His single nature change into a triple nature? Or had His nature always been triple? These excessively simple formulations of this question give hardly any idea of the depth and subtlety of the discussions which took place during the third century or of the diligence with which the participants ransacked both Scripture and Greek philosophy for ideas and for methods of approach. Although these discussions did not have the spectacular character of the great controversy over the Trinity in the fourth century which gave rise to the Nicene Creed, they were conducted on a high intellectual plane and were of the greatest importance in the history of Christianity, since they secured the foundation of one of the most important aspects of Christian belief.

An attempt must be made to describe the process by which God generated other natures from Himself, at the same time avoiding confusion with pagan ideas about the generation of gods from gods. An attempt must be made to describe, in terms which would satisfy the philosophically trained, how the three members of the Trinity could be One. Perhaps the most difficult problem, but one which must be faced, was to explain how Jesus Christ could be both God and man.

An impressive amount of good scholarship and hard thinking

went into these discussions. They were the product of men whose intellect and energy was of the highest quality. Yet such discussions do not represent the whole theological output of the third century. There is also a considerable literature of Biblical study and commentary. This, too, bears witness to the high degree of energy and intellect of its authors.

Nothing could be farther from the truth than to imagine the Christians as people whose nerve had failed and whose intellect was weak. "They met the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane." Not only was their nerve steady enough to face persecution with courage, and sometimes with recklessness, but they were able to handle the task of constantly recruiting new members and perfecting a Roman-style organization to hold those members together. Their intellects were strong enough to build up a closely reasoned edifice of theology on the twin foundations of Scripture and Greek philosophy. The Church Militant was slowly and steadily making progress on all fronts—doctrine, organization, contest with the pagan world, proselyting new members, and dealing with heresies.

The task of dealing with heresies was a continuing one. Irenaeus' *Against the Heresies* had shown that the Gnostics did not base their beliefs on Scripture, but had not brought an end to their influence. This group went on for hundreds of years more, claiming that they were the heirs of the purest Christian tradition. To us it seems remarkable that they could claim to have accepted Christ yet be so far removed in their views from what we know as Christianity. The reason was that they did not accept the Christ of the Bible, but seized on the idea of a redeemer and fitted it into a pagan system which taught that the original purity of the universe had been sullied by the introduction of base matter, a state of affairs which must some time be remedied by the help of one sent for that purpose.

One of the most interesting variants of Gnosticism was Manichaeanism. This sect was begun by a man named Mani, who

began to preach his doctrines in Persia about the middle of the third century. Mani emphasized the old Persian idea of dualism in the universe, the struggle of the principle of light with that of darkness. According to him a great struggle took place between the kingdoms of light and of darkness at an almost infinitely remote past time, leading to the mixture of the two principles. Mani recognized Christ as sent to remedy the situation, even calling himself an apostle of Christ.

It may be seen that such systems of religion are not altogether inconsistent with Christianity as we know it. The Gnostics and the Catholic Christians alike believed in a time when the world had not been created, in the imperfections of the worldly order, in a Christ sent from above with a mission, and in the eventual return to a perfect order. From the point of view of the ecclesiastical statesman the great defect in Gnosticism was that it was too indefinite and partook too much of the heterogeneousness of the pagan systems of the time. It may fairly be said that from the historian's point of view one great difference between Catholic Christianity and Gnosticism was that Catholic Christianity had that dynamism and toughness of temper necessary for any institution which is to survive and flourish—Roman qualities, those.

The Church uncompromisingly based itself on the Christ of Scripture and the creeds, rather than on a Christ fitted into pagan systems or on tolerance for all shades of belief concerning basic principles. The struggle to conquer Gnosticism and other heresies may have brought an undesirable element of rigidity into Catholic theology, but it also saved Christianity from becoming one of a number of rather vague religions hardly to be distinguished from one another and put it in a position to go forward as a distinct, united, dynamic religious body.

The pagan society which witnessed this struggle was bound to react against these disquieting elements in its midst. The vigorous emperor Decius, who succeeded Philip the Arab in 249, greatly desired to restore the old Empire in every way. As part of his plan

to restore the traditional Roman spirit he undertook a systematic persecution of the Christians on the old ground that their refusal to join in ceremonies of loyalty was harmful to morale. This persecution, which was not very successful, was soon dropped, but was begun again in a few years by Valerian. When Valerian was captured by the Persians in 260 and his son Gallienus became sole ruler, the persecution was formally dropped.

Perhaps Gallienus thought that the positive approach to the problem of psychological unity would work better than the negative one. Instead of persecuting the Christians for nonconformity he launched a program of encouragement of those literary, artistic, and philosophical activities which symbolized the achievement of paganism. His encouragement of the arts, otherwise an unsuitable and frivolous activity at such a desperate time, can best be explained as a part of a campaign of reactivating paganism.

The philosopher Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, was a favorite protégé of Gallienus. Plotinus' adaptation of the philosophy of Plato served henceforth as a rallying point for a great many of the pagans. Strangely enough, in many cases it also served as a preparation for Christianity.

Neoplatonism had no possibilities of appeal to the masses. It was an austere philosophy which taught the gradual approach to the One, as Plotinus called it, by rigid philosophical preparation. It recognized all the hierarchy of the old Greek gods and all the dear old ceremonial apparatus of the pagan world. But the spirit of the adept was to rise, step by step, from this traditional ground to lonely heights where it might at last stand unencumbered and face to face with the One. Plotinus himself believed that more than once, but not often, he had achieved this perfect mystic state.

Little as this philosophy was suited to the great majority of pagans, who looked for some such spiritual help as the hope of receiving grace represented to the Christians, it was highly congenial to the educated classes. It seems to have done much to give paganism some sort of unity.

Little by little the pagan Roman society began to rally around a rather loosely-defined set of values which in the minds of many were consciously opposed to Christian values. Neoplatonism gave satisfactory expressions to lofty intellectual and religious aspirations. The Greek cultural tradition was reaffirmed against what seemed to many the uncouthness of the Scriptures, whose literary form seemed hardly comparable to that of the Greek and Latin classics, and the personal uncouthness of many Christians. What the Christians thought of as a modern and forward-looking attitude seemed to many of the pagans the wanton destruction of a precious tradition. The next century was to see the conflict between the old way and the new way more clearly defined, with victory in the end going to the new, while ancient good faltered and almost passed away.

## IX *The Fourth Century:* *A Time of Recovery*

THE rise of Diocletian to the throne in 284 was the beginning of a period of recovery from the dire troubles of the third century. There is perhaps room for difference of opinion as to when this period ended. The date most frequently given is 395. For purposes of description, however, it will be useful to include the very important Germanic invasion of 406. We shall therefore consider the years from 284 to 406 as the fourth century.

By a combination of excellent management and some luck, Diocletian managed to keep himself on the throne until his voluntary retirement in the year 305. He had been temporarily successful in controlling attempts at usurpation. Although there were enough such attempts during the rest of the century to constitute a disgrace to any civilized nation, at least they did not do nearly as much harm as they had done during the third century.

Diocletian completed the process of making the monarchy absolute. The Senate still existed as an order of nobility, but could claim no share whatsoever in the choice of emperors or in the direction of the government. Like his recent predecessors, Diocletian openly based his power on the idea of divine right, although it is not clear whether he officially regarded himself as divine or only meant to imply a connection with divinity which was not to be too closely examined. He gave himself the additional

title of *Jovius*, an adjective meaning connected with Jove—"Jove's man," as it were.

By now the ceremonial of the court had become very elaborate indeed. Much of it was borrowed from the traditional ceremonies of the rulers of the East. On this point the numismatists and the archeologists are very helpful in supplying information which is not to be found in the written sources. The pictures of the emperors and their entourage on coins and on reliefs give us a clear idea of the development of Imperial and court dress and of some of the elaborate scenes which were enacted around the person of the emperor.

The number of people who surrounded the emperor was deliberately increased as a means of magnifying his dignity. His entourage became more and more like a court and less like the household of a soberly wealthy man, as it had been in the second century. If this system was useful in protecting the emperor's physical safety and in increasing the popular sense of his majesty, it had unfortunate results in secluding him from knowledge of what was going on among the agents of the government and among the people in general.

The old provinces were gradually broken up into smaller units. This gave less power and less opportunity for revolt to each governor and each commander. It was a natural thing to do after so many decades of constant attempts at usurpation of the throne, and it made the throne more secure; but at the same time it increased personnel and expense and made the government less manageable. The size of the army was increased as a new mobile force was built up to supplement the garrisons along all the important frontiers. This, too, added to the expense of government.

The extra burden of service to the state which had been imposed upon the *curiales*, or town councilors, during the third century was now made a regular practice. Unfortunately Diocletian could not bring himself to allow them to drop any of the old services to their towns. The double burden of using their resources in the

service of their fellow townsmen and in the service of the Imperial government often proved grievously heavy. Both the land and the resources of the whole Empire were carefully surveyed, and the survey was repeated at five-year intervals as a basis for the taxes of the next five years. Henceforth the taxes were levied on animals, slaves, and other wealth, as well as on wealth represented only by units of land. The new system, although it was more logical and efficient, also brought an increase in personnel—and in opportunities for corruption.

Diocletian took three colleagues to share his power and duties, trying to lessen the likelihood of a revolt by a successful general, since his colleagues, being already emperors, would have little to gain by a revolt. The move also increased the efficiency of the government, since more than one man was needed to perform the duties of the head of the state. This was no more of an innovation than Diocletian's other major moves. The system of having joint heads of state had been tried successfully in the third century.

Maximian, the senior of the three appointees, was given the titles of Augustus and Jovius, the same titles which Diocletian held. The superior influence of Diocletian was due to his prestige and ability rather than to a technical superiority in rank. There were two younger men: the able general Constantius, who was the father of Constantine the Great, and another good soldier, Galerius. Constantius and Galerius had the titles of Caesar and Herculius, the second title being meant to suggest Hercules, the helper of Jove. The arrangement was based on the expectation that at some unspecified time the two Augustuses would retire, allowing the Caesars to move up to the higher rank of Augustus and appoint new Caesars as their helpers.

These four men accomplished mighty works. They were confronted by the usual enemies from the outside and by the revolts of citizens who resented the increasing weight of taxation. In the intervals of armed conflict the four (with Diocletian always in the lead) dealt with the reconstruction needed after the troublous

times of the third century, such things as the repair of roads and fortifications and the restoration of public buildings.

When Diocletian and Maximian retired in 305, the struggles for power began again and finally led to the sole rule of Constantine the Great in 324. Constantine ruled until his death in 337. Although after him the contests for the throne rarely reached the distressing intensity of those in the third century, yet the wastage of lives, of energy, of materials, and of prestige and other intangibles caused by the contests over the succession in the fourth century was most unfortunate.

It is convenient to think of the years from 284 to 337 as a time when the gradual changes in the form and style of government which had been taking place during the third century were made permanent and made into a consistent system. The emperor now ruled by divine right. His residence, his dress, the style of his public ceremonies, his entourage, the new titles of count and duke for his chief assistants, all suggest the courts of later centuries. This was a far cry from the severely simple executive establishment of the second century. A new complexity in government, a new inquisitiveness, and a new burdensomeness were felt in the farthest corners of the realm.

On the other hand, the reign of Constantine was also a beginning. Two of his policies were to be of especially great importance—his encouragement of the Germans and his adoption of Christianity.

The absorption of the Germans, as the Roman Empire had absorbed so many other peoples, was nothing new; but Constantine accelerated the process. He enrolled Germans in the army, gave them civil offices, and promoted them freely. He brought in groups of Germans to farm land within the Empire which had been depopulated by plague and war. The advantages of this policy are obvious; the danger was that the groups of Germans were likely to live after the German way rather than to take on the Roman way.

The other policy, that of the acceptance of Christianity and the extension of status and privileges to it, was more complicated. It was a complete reversal of the policy of Diocletian. Diocletian's persecution of the Christians was initiated by a series of edicts in 303 and 304 (twenty years after his accession) which ordered that the Christians should be deprived of their sacred books and their sacred edifices should be destroyed, the clergy imprisoned, and all Christians compelled to offer sacrifices to the emperor and the gods as the pagans did.

Why he should have undertaken the persecution is something of a puzzle, since for some decades the Christians had not been molested. The ancient authors tell of certain incidents, such as the presence of Christians at a pagan ceremony, which was sufficient to cast a blight on the religious atmosphere; but the stories sound as if they had been invented to explain a sudden new policy.

The persecution was long—eight years—and rigorously conceived; but it was not a success. The majority of the people no longer felt that the Christians were perversely refusing to join in a basic way of life, as the pagans had felt in the second century. By now men knew what admirable and heavy obligations the Christians had taken on themselves. Generations of familiarity had shown them to be fellow citizens who walked humbly before their own God, practiced no abominable rites, and rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's. Paganism, meanwhile, had developed a very strong monotheistic tendency which brought it much nearer to Christianity, while philosophy, always concerned with questions closely connected with those which religion answers, had also drawn nearer to Christianity. The pagans protected the Christians whenever they could do so. Even the officials often connived with the Christians to mitigate the force of the edicts. For instance, bishops are said to have been allowed to deliver volumes of heretical writings to the officials instead of volumes of the Scriptures. Other bishops withdrew to the coun-

try and were not pursued by the civil authorities. The emperors themselves varied in their enthusiasm for the persecution. While Galerius tried to enforce the edicts with implacable fury, Constantius practically ignored them.

In 311 Galerius, who was now the senior Augustus, fell mortally ill. On his deathbed he had a change of heart and issued a decree which proclaimed that the Christians might legally pursue all the activities of their religion as long as they did not disturb the peace. Not only did he call off the bloodhounds; he placed the fugitive within the pale of the law.

When Galerius was removed from the consortium of emperors by his death, the other members entered on a struggle to improve their positions instead of following the reasonable scheme of Diocletian. In 312 Constantine was marching toward Rome to fight against his colleague Maxentius.

Constantine was of a religious nature. He seems to have been devoted to the cult of the Sun. He was genuinely worried by the fact that Maxentius had made an appeal to the pagan gods with all the old apparatus of sacrifices and vows. Just before the battle he had the famous vision which seemed to tell him that in the sign of Christ he should conquer, and in response he had the soldiers put the monogram of Christ on their shields. His army was victorious in the next day's battle. He therefore became a Christian and remained one for the twenty-five remaining years of his life. He further testified to his own Christian conviction by gradually improving the official status of Christianity. First it was tolerated; then it was actively promoted; then paganism was actively combatted. This change more than any other made it seem that the old order in the Empire had yielded, giving place to a new.

Constantine, who had broken the admirable system of Diocletian to gain sole rule for himself, did as all the usurping emperors of the third century had done and planned to found a dynasty. He carefully trained his sons to rule; several years before

his death, he installed his sons Constantine II, Constantius, and Constans, together with two of their cousins, as his assistants in various parts of the Empire.

The historian need not be accused of invading the province of the child psychologist if he allows himself the melancholy reflection that the example of Constantine was a more powerful influence on his children than his precepts. The fact is that Constantine was capable of revolting cruelty. In his later years he had murdered both his wife Fausta and his son Crispus on charges which were definite enough, but which may well have been unjustified.

His brutality and his ruthlessness, as well as his imperial abilities, were faithfully reflected in his sons. On their accession they quickly rid themselves of the two cousins who already held office and eliminated other near relatives whom they thought capable of causing them trouble later. Only two were left—Gallus and Julian.

Three years later, in 340, Constans, the youngest, became embroiled with his brother Constantine over the division of the spheres of command and defeated him in a battle in which Constantine was killed. Constans then ruled the West alone until 350, when he was defeated and killed by a usurper named Magnentius. In the year 353 Magnentius was defeated and killed by Constantius, the surviving brother, in another senseless battle which wasted many more thousand lives of sorely needed fighting men.

Constantius ruled until 361. He did die a natural death, although he was even then on his way to another civil conflict. In the meantime he had raised his cousin Gallus to power with himself. The brutal and violent behavior of Gallus, however, showed him so unfit for the exercise of power that Constantius was forced to depose him. Of all the near relatives of Constantius, only Julian remained.

Constantius was sadly in need of a loyal colleague. On the ad-

vice of the empress he gave Julian the title of Caesar and sent him to Gaul. At first he gave him no military power and surrounded him with a throng of advisers and spies, but the incompetence of the general leading the Imperial armies against the current German adversaries was such that in 357 Constantius put Julian in charge of the armed forces.

Unlike the other rulers of the century, Julian had no practical training in warfare and administration during his earlier years. Unlike them, too, he had the best education which the times afforded—in literary studies, in rhetoric, and in philosophy. Julian had considerable natural ability. With determination, good sense, and attention to detail he succeeded in his immediate task, the task of repelling invaders from across the Rhine. Unlike his relatives of the house of Constantine, he had a strong feeling for rigid purity and efficiency in the details of government. He set himself at once to reform the government in Gaul, attempting to clean up corruption and reduce taxes. He also tried to reverse the policy started by Constantine of giving rapid advancement to Germans in the army and in the government.

Presently his cousin, the emperor, ordered him to send a considerable number of his troops to the East for the war there. The troops, who were Germans, had enlisted on the understanding that they were not to cross the Alps. They were willing to serve their term near home, but not to be taken to a strange and far-away place. In the end, in desperation, they proclaimed Julian as their emperor, hoping thus to empower him to protect their interests. The horrified Julian tried to negotiate further with Constantius; but the matter would have been decided by force, had not Constantius died on his way to the battle, leaving Julian as emperor.

Julian's short reign, from 360 to 363, was marked by further attempts at detailed reform in government and, most of all, by his attempt to restore paganism. In this matter more than in any other he was unlike the emperors after Constantine. They were

all Christians. Although Julian had been reared as a Christian, the charms of pagan culture and the lofty tenets of Neoplatonic philosophy had wooed him away. If the gulf between philosophy and Christianity was now so narrow that a short leap would cross it, one might also leap back in the other direction without too great a sense of psychic upheaval. Julian was merely the most notable of the many who did so.

His was not the paganism of the simple worshiper of the old familiar spirits, but partly that of the philosophically trained thinker and partly that of the sentimental lover of the old Hellenic tradition. His experience as a Christian had left an indelible mark on him, too, for he tried to reorganize paganism in imitation of the magnificent ecclesiastical organization of Christianity. In effect, he tried to found a pagan Church on the lines of the Church Militant.

Julian's career was like that of a scholar turned man of affairs, and this was his weakness. He did not have the experience of practical matters which would have given him the sense of what groups of people can and cannot be induced to do. Not only did the Christians bitterly resent his attempt to turn the clock back to the days before Constantine, but also the pagans remained cool toward the regimented reorganization which he offered them. The whole attempt was quickly ended at his death.

The career of Julian, brief as it was, shows us something of three fourth-century cities. Due to his somewhat unusual family situation he was at first privately educated by a strict tutor. In fact, his education was so private that it really was an imprisonment. But the empress presently persuaded Constantius to allow him to study at Athens.

Athens could still charm and inspire men, even when its spring-time glamor had faded to a pale Indian summer. Its political and economic importance had long since gone; but it was still the home of the four famous universities, the schools of the Platonic, Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic philosophies. Attic

Greek was still the standard of purity in the Greek language, and the literary and dramatic works of the Athenian giants of long ago still retained that canonical rank which, indeed, they were never to lose.

Julian was not the first nor the last young man whose severe private education yielded to the charms of a beautiful university city, to the lectures of urbane and subtle professors, and to the earnest discussions of youth over the late cup of wine. Ordinary prudence forbade him to mention as yet to his fiery Imperial relative, or to anyone, that his Christian upbringing had yielded to philosophy. Nevertheless, he now became a pagan at heart, the most famous of all apostates from Christianity.

Much of his time as Imperial representative in Gaul was spent in the chief town of the tribe of the Parisii, Lutetia Parisiorum, later to be known as Paris. It was a modest place on an island in the River Seine. The island was walled and was connected with either bank of the river by a bridge. Here he was happy. He had work to do and did it well. The pure and austere provincial manners of Gaul suited his disposition. Later he was to speak of the town as "my beloved Lutetia."

In 362, Julian, now emperor and a professed pagan, went to Antioch to prepare his campaign against the Persians. Antioch had been founded in 300 B.C. by Seleucus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great who divided his empire after his death. Its site on the Orontes River in Syria was an ideal spot for a city in an agricultural and trading region. Like Rome, it had a port not far away, at the mouth of the river.

Antioch contested with Alexandria the place of third city in the Empire after Rome and Constantinople. It probably had about 150,000 inhabitants at this time. It served as the center for the prosperous and populous region surrounding. Traders, scholars, soldiers, and officers of the Imperial administration came and went, keeping the city thoroughly in touch with the world. Its soundly based wealth, which seems hardly to have diminished

under the economic strains of this century, served to support refined luxury of living, beautiful buildings, and a sustained gaiety and variety of entertainment. Its populace was noted throughout the Empire for its gay (and sometimes riotous) manner of life, as well as for its frivolity and dissoluteness. For all that, it was a center of every kind of intellectual activity—literary, medical, astrological, theological. Its theologians were noted for their keen knowledge of Aristotle, their sensible attitude toward the interpretation of the Scriptures, and their sound philological and historical scholarship.

Julian did not yield himself to the amenities of Antioch. Probably he was too much the preoccupied philosopher and executive to be pleased by the hippodrome, the theaters, the porticoes, the luxurious public baths, the constant and salubrious west wind, the supply of fresh water, so plentiful that every house had its fountain, the lighting of the streets at night, and the gay round of festivals. Even the celebration of the pagan festival of Maiuma probably did not please him, since the chief feature of it was that the prostitutes of the city appeared as a group to bathe naked in the basin of the public fountains. Instead he went to the famous temple of Apollo in the suburb of Daphne ("Laurel") and publicly scolded the city because the festival of Apollo was not celebrated there in proper style.

The sophisticated and cynical populace found their young philosopher-king an endless source of amusement. They ridiculed the huge sacrifices he made to the pagan gods in the hope of getting good omens for his campaign against the Persians. In this city of elegantly clean-shaven men inclined to foppish dress, his beard and his philosophical negligent attire seemed rustic. Yet the Antiochenes were good-natured people; it became the custom for passers-by at night to pick Julian's Gallic soldiers out of the gutters and dump them at the barracks gate, since it was understood that they were unused to the temptations of a city.

Naturally the presence of so many soldiers and the gathering

of supplies for the campaign caused prices to rise. The people began to greet Julian with the cry, "Everything plentiful, everything expensive!" He rose to the bait and urged the magistrates to curb the rise of prices. When they declared themselves unable to do so, he issued an Imperial edict for that purpose. Thereupon wheat, the staple of life, suddenly disappeared from the market. Julian took the bait again and had wheat brought to the city from the Imperial granaries. Thereupon the shrewd merchants of Antioch performed a neat operation which caused the wheat to pass through their hands and come on the market at a good profit to themselves.

Julian was disgusted and exasperated. He wrote a satire in which he scolded the people of Antioch once more and said farewell to them forever. He then went off to his Persian War, while they returned to their Festival of Roses, their summer and winter bath establishments, and doubtless to long conversations about their unworldly monarch. Before the end of the year 363 Julian had died of a wound received in battle and was succeeded by Jovian. Jovian at once canceled all the restrictions which Julian had imposed on the Christians and all the measures designed to set up a pagan church.

But in the next year, 364 A.D., Jovian also died, and was succeeded by Valentinian, a soldier from Pannonia (now Hungary), who made his brother Valens his associate in the Imperial power. Under these two men the Empire was clearly divided into an eastern and a western sphere. Valentinian took the West, where he showed himself a most able soldier. He repelled and chastised the Germans who attacked the Imperial frontiers, and also built an excellent series of fortifications along the Rhine.

Valens met his death in 378 in one of the most unfortunate events of the century, the great defeat of the Imperial armies at Adrianople. For a good many years the Germanic tribe of the Visigoths had been rather unpleasant neighbors across the Danube to the Balkan provinces of the Empire. Some years before the

battle they and the Romans had begun to feel the movement of the Huns toward Europe. The Huns were fierce and able fighters whose repulsive physical appearance and wild ways made their enemies feel they were fighting men scarcely human.

A sudden surge of the Huns so unnerved the Visigoths that they implored permission to cross the Danube and settle within the boundaries of the Empire. Valens gladly gave them permission to do so, since they offered to fight for the Empire; by now, when the Romans had absorbed so many other peoples, the idea of receiving foreigners into the Empire was nothing strange. There was room for them; they could be used both as farmers and as soldiers. Their enrollment in the army would bring the government some very welcome money which the provinces would pay to replace the soldiers whom they would otherwise have to supply.

Accordingly the whole Visigothic people crossed the Danube under Roman supervision. They were expected to give up their weapons, receive lands for settlement, and be issued new weapons if they joined the Roman army. It was typical of this time, however, that the officials in charge of the move saw a fine opportunity for graft. In return for bribes they allowed the Visigoths to retain their arms. They seized the opportunity to sell them food at exorbitant prices and took advantage of them in arranging the details of settlement. The result of this outrageous treatment was that the Romans, instead of acquiring useful new manpower, found that they had on their hands a whole people driven almost to desperation by rapacious and deceitful treatment.

The quarrel came to the decision by arms in 378. The Visigoths won the battle of Adrianople and from now on were to be inside the Empire, yet not of it. They repeatedly tried, with somewhat heavy-handed methods, to bring the government to some agreement which would give them a recognized position and territory. They would gladly have left the Empire had they not

feared the Huns, who were now in control of the land beyond the Danube.

When Valentinian died in 375, he left the rule of the West to his son Gratian, who was just coming of age. Gratian divided the West with his brother Valentinian II, who was only a little boy. On the death of Valens at Adrianople in 378, he appointed Theodosius, a great soldier and administrator, to be his colleague and rule the eastern part of the Empire.

Theodosius was able after a fashion to deal with the claims of the Visigoths and even to use them occasionally as soldiers. He also was able to meet the usual Persian attacks, and attacks from new bodies of Goths. But mismanagement within the Empire dealt it new blows hardly less harmful than the defeat at Adrianople.

In 383 the commander of the British armies, Maximus, took advantage of resentment against Gratian's frivolous way of life to overthrow him and assume control of the West. He was able to stay in power until in 388 Theodosius finally disengaged himself from other wars and defeated him. Only a few years later Theodosius met and overthrew another usurper in the West. These two campaigns cost the lives of many men. Worse than this, they forced Theodosius to enroll barbarians in greater numbers than before. By his death in 395 the army was composed largely of barbarians, most of whom were Germans, fighting under their own officers and with their own kinds of tactics and weapons.

Another misfortune was that Theodosius' sons Honorius and Arcadius, who succeeded him, were not capable of riding the whirlwind as their father had done. Both were weak of will and at least open to the suspicion of being dim of wit. Their father, who well knew the limitations of their abilities, made the Vandal officer Stilicho the guardian and regent for Honorius, whose portion was the western Empire, and perhaps also the nominal guardian of Arcadius, who ruled in the East.

The character and activities of Stilicho are hard to judge. This may be because he had no real policy. Some historians have regarded him as a great man, while to others he has seemed unfit for Imperial tasks. He was one of the many Germans whose families had lived within the Empire for some generations, not a crude barbarian, but a civilized and cultivated man. Yet he retained certain Germanic characteristics, the best of which was intense personal loyalty. He served his royal master faithfully, so faithfully that at the end, when he fell from favor, he refused to protect himself by force and allowed himself to be executed.

Naturally Stilicho also believed that there was a place in the Empire for the Germans. The Roman emperors themselves had officially encouraged the Germans for over half a century. In Stilicho's time, however, there was a strong anti-German reaction in both parts of the Empire. In 400 the populace of Constantinople massacred a large number of German troops stationed there, after which the East reverted to the use of citizen armies. A corresponding reaction in the West, coupled with resentment of some of Stilicho's acts, brought about his downfall.

Probably Stilicho's German sympathies are the key to his treatment of the Visigoths. After the death of Theodosius these people, feeling that official promises to them had not been kept, decided to take a stronger line. They elected Alaric, one of their nobles, as their king. Alaric's efforts to gain some recognized place for his people led to a series of armed conflicts. Twice Stilicho had Alaric's army at his mercy and spared it.

The most dangerous of Stilicho's acts, however, was his struggle with the eastern part of the Empire over Illyricum (roughly the Balkans), which was the best recruiting ground of the Empire and which he wished to have attached to the West, as it formerly had been. This question put the two halves of the Empire in open opposition and even led to warfare—a new kind of civil war as foolish as the many civil wars which had been fought over the throne.

At the end of the year 406, in the midst of Stilicho's struggles with Alaric and with the East, four temporarily allied peoples broke through the Rhine line. These were peoples who had lived near or on the borders of the eastern Empire and had been driven slowly westward by the pressure of the Huns and others. We may call this a Germanic invasion, since three of the peoples—the Asding and Siling Vandals and the Suevi—were Germanic, while only one, the Alani, was not.

Although the Rhine line had been weakened by the removal of some of the best troops for Stilicho's struggle with the East, the first assault of the four peoples did not succeed. But on their second try they entered Gaul, apparently by crossing the Rhine on the ice during a bitterly cold spell. Spreading out, they plundered and destroyed in several parts of the province, after the first months tending to move toward Spain.

This invasion was the great turning point. Invaders had broken into Gaul before and sometimes had stayed there for years before being ejected. The invasion of 406 was never rolled back. Other Germanic people, Franks and Burgundians, streamed into Gaul in its wake. All these Germans, in spite of their roaring, brawling entry, wished to stay, to be a part of the Empire and to fight for it.

The Romans had successfully absorbed a great many Germans during the fourth century and earlier. Now was the point when the absorption of the Germans got out of hand. The invaders of 406 settled among the Romans, but on their own terms, as separate peoples legally separate from the Romans—terms which made their complete Romanization impossible. These were the Germans whose restless energy and sense of non-Roman unity were to lead them slowly to take the control of the West away from the Romans. If the Empire in the West had been able to repel this invasion or later to eject the invaders, it might perhaps have been able to keep the upper hand and to go on with the slow and effective absorption of small groups of Germans, gaining from them new strength to maintain the Roman way.

# X *The Management of Economic and Social Problems in the Fourth Century*

THE fourth century is the crucial time for our investigation, since it was the eve of the troubles which led directly to the loss of the West. If the Empire had any vital weaknesses of a sort which should inevitably have caused the West to be lost, we should find evidence of them in the life of the fourth century. There is no such evidence.

The persistent problems of administration were handled with varying skill and success, as had been generally the case. The pressures on the Empire were increased and some serious mistakes were made. These pressures and these mistakes did in fact lead to the loss of the West; but this result was far from inevitable. To use a homely analogy, the driver of an automobile may make some serious mistakes in the pressure of heavy traffic or under dangerous weather conditions and still not have an accident. A certain combination of other causes must usually be added to his mistakes to cause the accident. The role of pure chance must also be admitted.

The problem of maintaining the authority of the central government had three aspects in the fourth century: the difficulty of controlling the great landowners, the difficulty of controlling

the expanded bureaucracy, and the increase in the ever-present tendency toward a division between the eastern and the western parts of the Empire.

The civil wars, invasions, and economic distress of the third century led to a great increase in the number of large holders of land. In the third century the medium or small landholder might well be overwhelmed by the pressure of government demands for all the grain in the barns of a whole region, or for draft animals, or for all the animals which would serve as food for an army on the march through the region; but the man of more resources might escape by using his influence with the authorities or by bribery—or he might have other estates out of the danger zone whose produce would enable him to avoid bankruptcy.

The effect of a sudden barbarian raid would be roughly the same. The small man, if he did not lose his life, might see his house and barn burned, his animals driven off, his vines and olive trees destroyed, his wheat destroyed or stolen, and be left with nothing but his bare ground—no helpers, no vines, no trees, and no seed for the next year. In such a case he could do nothing except convey his land to some richer man who had managed to defend his own property or buy off the invaders, and to become a tenant farmer or laborer for the richer man.

The process of the formation of large holdings was also furthered by the liberality of some of the fourth-century emperors, especially Constantine. The emperors had huge crown estates at their disposal. Since Constantine's promotion of Christianity had brought him into conflict with the upper classes, who were largely devoted to paganism, he brought forward a number of men to join the senatorial order and temper the intransigence of the older aristocrats. Naturally he had to present some of them with the means of maintaining their new position.

One of the most interesting books of the fourth century criticizes Constantine's liberality to individuals. It is called *De Rebus Bellicis*, or *On Military Affairs*. The unknown author makes a

very able statement of necessary reforms; possibly it was presented to some government bureau. It is a most interesting testimony to some of the difficulties of the time and does great credit to the penetration and originality of its author. He argues for the lessening of Imperial largesse, for a stern fight against official corruption, and for a larger-minded attitude toward new inventions. He even describes, with diagrams, some of his own inventions, such as prefabricated bridges for the army and paddle-wheel ships moved by oxen turning a mill shaft in the hold.

Still another factor in the formation of large holdings was the policy of granting exemptions to the *munera*, the obligation of the landholders who made up the council of each town to furnish the government with certain goods and services. In their efforts to build up a loyal and well-rewarded bureaucracy the emperors allowed the landed property of the higher bureaucrats to be exempted from the *munera* and to be subject to only ordinary taxes. This increased the pressure of the *munera* on others, and a little man might be compelled to give up his land and become a tenant farmer or laborer. A man who became a member of the Senate was also excused from the *munera*, which again would fall more heavily on the other landowners of the district.

In the traditional picture of the fourth century the rich are represented as living on huge estates which clearly foreshadow the form of the medieval manor. Although there is a great deal of truth in this, it is also true that many men had scattered holdings of the sort that one would expect if shrewd and able men had watched for their opportunities to acquire an additional farm here and one there. The very rich had estates scattered all over the Empire; a man might have holdings in several different provinces, some of which were unified holdings and some of which were scattered smaller holdings.

The rich impaired the authority of the central government in two ways, by evading their just financial burdens and by resisting the conscription of their dependents for the army. The

historian Ammianus Marcellinus remarks that, although the poor were forced to pay their taxes punctually and in full, the rich could generally delay payment in one way or another and sometimes after such delays could successfully plead inability to pay and persuade the government to cancel some of the arrears of taxes. The same historian remarks that in a certain district probably three men could not be found to assume the *munera*. This remark is generally taken to mean that the burden of the *munera* had completely ruined almost every man in the district. The remark could also mean, however, that somehow most of the men in the district had managed to gain entry into the senatorial order or the bureaucracy and gain exemption from the *munera*. In another place he tells us that a good many men of a certain community had paid heavy bribes for such exemption.

We can readily imagine what large numbers of men may have been dependent on some of the great landowners. On the other hand, the landowner also needed his dependents, since the land had to be worked, and there is good reason to believe that there was some shortage of manpower at this time. So naturally the great landowners were eager to prevent the departure of their men for military service and were often able to do so.

This seems to have been especially true toward the end of the period. An official rate of pay for exemption from service was established by law. Ammianus tells us that when the emperor Valens planned to receive the Visigoths into the Empire, he expected that they would render military service in return for the grant of lands and that the government would profit by receiving the payments for the many men in other parts of the Empire who could therefore be excused from serving. If the landowners did recruit men for the army, they sent the least able among their dependents.

Such vast concentrations of wealth are justifiable only on the ground of public service or economic efficiency. A loosely organized government might well give a lord almost full control of an area

in return for the service of government on the spot. In certain cases such a policy can be useful—for instance, after a conquest, as in England after 1066. In the Empire of the fourth century there was no such situation and no such need. What had happened was that a large group of people had acquired such wealth that they could sometimes oppose or defy the necessary measures of the government. They gave neither a necessary service nor increased economic efficiency in return.

The government also had difficulty in managing the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy of the fourth century was a natural outgrowth of conditions in the third. Diocletian's gradual multiplication of the number of provincial divisions, which seemed necessary to prevent any one governor or general from having the forces with which to start a revolution, entailed the multiplication of personnel. His attempt to tighten up the system of taxation required still further personnel. The increase in the Imperial entourage added personnel.

Probably many of the men who did the work of government were reasonably efficient. Most of them must have had the normal desire of a man who has work worthy of his powers to do it well, qualified, of course, by the boredom that comes from too much routine. Unfortunately there is ample proof that corruption existed. We do not know that the whole bureaucracy was venal, nor need we assume it. Perhaps the prize exhibit is the shockingly corrupt mistreatment of the Visigoths by the high officials who supervised their settlement within the Empire. These men so mistreated the new members of the Empire that they turned them from friends into enemies. The anonymous author of *De Rebus Bellicis* complains that the corruptness of the provincial governors drained the financial strength of the government. The severity of the penalties set for certain kinds of malfeasance in office shows how difficult the government found this problem. It is probable that many acts not to the public interest were the result of the feeling among the members of the bureaucracy that only the

upper classes—they themselves and the rich landowners—were worth considering.

Another difficulty in maintaining the authority of the central government arose from the growing division between the eastern and the western parts of the Empire. Although the emperors of the second century, aided by the enthusiasm for their new program of turning the Empire into a commonwealth, had been able in large measure to overcome the old feelings of resentment in the East which had been caused by the often brutal Roman conquest of the eastern regions, a real feeling of division had always remained in the background, such as there is between the Scots and the English. The East never lost the feeling that it was culturally superior to the West. In spite of the diffusion of language, the fact that Greek was the common language in the East and Latin in the West remained a source of division of sentiment. There was also some difference in conditions of living and in temperament, not unlike the difference between the northern and the southern parts of some modern nations, such as the United States, Italy, or Russia.

The lack of cooperation between East and West had much to do with the crucial fact that the Germanic invaders were able to enter Gaul in 406. There were those who leveled a forthright charge of treason at Stilicho, the guardian of Honorius and the responsible head of the West, for not doing more to prevent the entry of the Germans or to eject them once they had entered, instead of putting his energy and forces into the contention with the East. But even if Stilicho was not to blame for the failure to keep the Germans out, a more closely united Empire might well have been able to eject them before their continued presence created a new danger for the West.

The second problem, that of regulating the succession to the throne, was at least dealt with better than it had been in the third century, but was not handled successfully. Constantine did violence to principle and wasted many lives as he made his way to the

throne. His sons murdered their relatives and fought battles in the same bad cause. The revolt of Magnentius was very costly.

The revolts of Maximus and Eugenius with which Theodosius had to deal at the end of the period were especially unfortunate, since they caused him to introduce considerable numbers of non-Romanized barbarians into the Imperial service at a time when the army already had too large a component of barbarians. It was also most regrettable that the completely unnecessary damage and disorder caused by these revolts came at a time of strong pressures from the outside.

Was the third problem, that of public finance, basically more difficult to handle in the fourth century than in the second or third? Surely the government of the second century enjoyed some slight advantages in this field apart from those which resulted from its own efficient dealing with the other problems. In general it was less subject to military pressures from the outside, so more energy could be devoted to economic development and expansion. Even so, the low productivity of the ancient world allowed so small a margin of resources for public finance that the severe German war of Marcus Aurelius brought about a shortage of public funds which compelled the emperor to sell some of the crown property to finance the latter part of the war.

It is difficult to believe that the loss of material resources in the third century was more than a minor factor in the financial problem of the fourth century. The cities were rebuilt, although often on a much smaller scale, since the need of defense seemed much more urgent and the great enthusiasm for city life had waned. The farms must have been restored. Some of the objects carried off by the barbarians were lost forever, but we must remember that coin carried off by the barbarians or paid to them to keep the peace tended to return to the Empire through the channels of trade which reached out to all the neighboring peoples.

The loss of people through enslavement to the barbarians and through the plague quite probably made itself felt well into the

fourth century. It was a loss of women and children as well as of men, which had more serious long-range effects than the loss merely of men in warfare. Losses of this kind, as the demographers have shown, are felt for several generations. Probably the population was not reduced to what it had been in the time of Augustus; but in this machineless economy a loss of population definitely meant a loss of strength.

Although the suggestion has been made that the soil of the Empire was becoming exhausted, the evidence adduced to prove this theory seems only to prove that the polite Latin authors believed that the Golden Age was gone. The suggestion has also been made that the competence of the farmers was disappearing because of some mysterious kind of amnesia; but recent factual studies show rather that agricultural knowledge was safely transmitted for a good many generations beyond the fourth century.

On the other hand, the increased size of the bureaucracy and of the army was a perceptible added burden upon an economy which rested on a productivity so much lower than ours. The larger numbers of men in nonproductive operations had to be directly supported by the smaller numbers of men in productive operations.

The economic system of this century has been called "a monstrous machine." In the first place, the Empire was minutely resurveyed for purposes of taxation. The system of taxation, which has caused scholars a great deal of perplexity, seems to have been one which rested on differing units of taxability; the difficulty has been in discovering which units were used in which regions, since the system was not uniform. The tax basis was adjusted every five years. Taxes were collected in kind as well as in money. Grain was the most important item. We have a great deal of information about the collection of the grain and the methods used to deliver it to the army and to the civil servants. The payment of the government's employees partly in grain was a striking feature of the system and one which long led scholars to suppose

that the money economy had given way to a so-called natural economy, or one without money.

This was not the case. The troubles of the third century led, naturally enough, to inflation. As a result the government came to rely more and more in the third century on payments in kind, which would be independent of money. The government of the fourth century simply continued this practice and systematized it into payments from the government to its employees as well as payments from the population to the government. Although this did indeed involve a considerable amount of governmental machinery, we must remember that it may in fact have been less complicated than payment in money, since the supplies of grain and other natural products would have had to be moved somehow from their origin to their destination under any system.

The *munera* were another feature which gave the system the appearance of a great and oppressive machine. From the early third century on, the government had compelled the *curiales*, or members of the local governments, to assume these administrative duties—the collection of taxes, the gathering of the payments in kind due to the government, the recruiting of men for the army, and others—in addition to their local duties. Now the tasks of the *curiales* were heavier than before, with less local pride and enthusiasm to help support them. In the late third century the Imperial government found it necessary to decree that the position of such men was hereditary and that their tasks formed a charge on their real property.

Descriptions of the relation between the government and the *curiales* have generally emphasized its spectacular element rather than giving a sober functional account of this method of getting some of the government's work done. Valentinian and Valens transferred the work to the officials of the government for a short time, then returned to the old system of having the *curiales* do it; unfortunately we have no means of knowing why they tried the new method and abandoned it. It is certain that the *curiales* and

the government waged an unending battle of wits. The *curiales* were soon denied such obvious devices as fictitious transfers of property. Some of them tried entering the Christian ministry, but the government then forced them to leave their property behind them. Some gave up and put themselves under the protection of the more powerful as tenants. Some made their way into the army or the more humble gilds. Some even fled from the Empire, preferring life among the barbarians.

An English scholar, B. H. Warmington, brought a little more order into the discussion by pointing out that many of the *curiales*, especially in the earlier part of the period, were trying to escape upward rather than sideways or downward. That is, they were men of wealth who wished to be members of the senatorial order. The government did not reject their pleas for advancement; it rather compelled them first to serve a stated number of years at their municipal tasks. Those who had gained admission to the Senate without performing their full duties were compelled to go back and serve for the remaining number of years, then allowed to consider whether they still wished to shoulder the expense of a senatorial career, which also had its duties.

As the century advanced, there were more examples of outright flight from these tasks, probably because corruption increased and relatively humble men were more often oppressed by the Imperial officials or by their more powerful neighbors with the connivance of the officials. Ammianus Marcellinus tells us, for instance, that during a certain decade many small landowners in the province of Illyricum were ruined by the demands of the Imperial postal officials for horses.

The demands of the government bore heavily on everyone during this century; in fact the Empire was living beyond its income by trying to support so much government and so much army. Yet the government obviously did not intend to ruin a whole useful class of men, and nothing in the theory of this system as we can reconstruct it implies that the government was deliberately squeez-

ing out the medium and small landowners. This method of getting Imperial work done was not necessarily ruinous, although it was necessarily burdensome. High taxes, whether they are taxes in money or of some other kind, will naturally provoke a struggle between the government and those who must pay. The key to success in such a situation is to make burdens as light as possible, to distribute them as fairly as may be, and to keep the administration efficient and honest. If the government could have kept the bureaucracy incorruptible and made the burdens more equitably distributed, its financial system could have worked successfully.

Probably the reduction of the class of tenant farmers, or *coloni*, to serfdom has evoked more distaste among modern scholars than any other feature of the finance of the fourth century. The land-owners had to pay heavy taxes in kind. They needed a labor force on which they could rely. Their difficulties in keeping their tenant farmers were such that they apparently asked the government to fix the tenant farmers to the soil. These men lost freedom of movement, but no other freedom. This was indeed a dreadful thing, and it seemed especially so to scholars raised in the school of classical economics at the end of the last century and at the beginning of this. The Imperial government had frozen these men to their occupation! There are those, however, who know to their sorrow that there is one thing worse than being frozen to one's occupation, and that is to be frozen out of it. If the serf cannot leave the land, neither can the land leave him. In any but the most flourishing times the little man is generally much less concerned about being able to leave his job than about being able to keep it.

The Marxist contribution is to suggest that the armies of this period were no good because the *coloni*, being serfs and feeling that they had no part in the fortunes of the state, naturally would not fight well if they were drafted into the army. This, too, is unrealistic. Experience shows that any healthy man can be made into a good soldier if the training program is well-managed.

Further indignation is aroused by the fact that a good many gilds of businessmen and workingmen were frozen to their work. By the fourth century a member of a gild could not leave his gild. His property was surety for the performance of his work for the government and could not be alienated. His son must continue in the gild.

Obviously something is lost if a man's occupation is determined for him by heredity. On the other hand, we can hardly say that the gilds were enslaved or made serfs. The government paid them for their performances. After they had performed what was required of them, they were free to enter the open market. A member of the shippers' gild, for instance, could carry what private cargo he pleased if his ship were returning empty from a voyage on which it had carried government cargo. Perhaps we could say that such a gild was like a modern corporation which has agreed to do four-fifths of its work for the government at a somewhat stingy rate of pay and does one-fifth in the open market. There is one difference, however: in the simpler ancient economy there were fewer opportunities than now to devise new goods and services and thereby make gratifying profits. Therefore an organization which was permanently tied to mostly government work need not have eyed the open market with any great longing.

But who was outside this structure of economic compulsion? The higher officials were, and the military, and members of the senatorial order. Although they had to pay taxes, they were not subject to the performance of the *munera*, as was the ordinary landowner. Some businessmen also were outside—those whose products or services were not needed by the government. Bankers were outside. It is worthwhile to take special notice of the fact that there were evidently some hardheaded businessmen who did not shrink from buying landed estates, thereby making themselves members of the class of the *curiales* and subject to the performance of the *munera*. This is shown by a rule in the Theodo-

sian Code which provides that a man who wanted to buy land should assume the burden of the *munera* only in proportion to his landed property, while his money which remained invested in business was to be free of curial obligations.

What operations were outside the structure of compulsion? We know that wheat left over when taxes in kind had been delivered was sold on the open market, for there is evidence that landowners disliked the fall of prices in years of great plenty. The gilds could operate outside this structure as well as inside it. Non-government business and money lending were outside. There were rich men who had no land.

Was such a system stable enough to endure, or did it imply an eventual economic breakdown? There is no reason why this system could not endure if it were fairly and honestly and efficiently administered. It was indeed a hard life for those somewhat down the economic scale, who were pinched hardest by the heavy taxes. Yet there was nothing in this method of conducting public finance which implied eventual breakdown, nor is there any way of demonstrating that the method of public finance was a cause of the events which led to the loss of the West.

That it was possible to live pleasantly under this economic and financial system is shown by the works of the poet and rhetorician Ausonius of Bordeaux. The poet's father, Julius Ausonius, was one of those men of means moved by some impulse to take up the practice of medicine. He moved unpretentiously and serenely through life, the very image of the grave and kindly physician. Though his property was large enough to have troubled the minds of some men, his attention was fixed on deeds of mercy and help. The poet has also left us a detailed picture of his own personality. He was a talented provincial personality of a kind which must have been very common in the Empire. He taught rhetoric for years in the university at Bordeaux; this was the standard liberal education given to the children of the more fortunate, an education which prepared young men for the law or the Imperial

service. In his maturer years he was chosen to educate the young prince Gratian. He won the admiration of his pupil, resulting in his elevation to a series of high Imperial posts, culminating in the prefecture of the Gallic provinces and then the consulship.

Ausonius was well read in the classics and very competent in expressing himself in either prose or verse. Doubtless the many pupils who passed through his hands became well read and were able to express themselves well. All over the Empire there must have been many learned and earnest teachers inculcating a high degree of traditional literacy in large numbers of young men. If Ausonius was not a genius and did not produce any pupils of genius, we cannot blame him or the system. An educational system which steadily turns out young people prepared to meet the normal demands of society is successful.

His writings, besides showing something of the educational process of the times, give us a picture of a society which, like most societies, had learned to live with its difficulties without undue complaint. He tells us of the sunnier side of life in a beautiful agricultural country. His own estate, to which he had retired after his father's death, was comfortably near to Bordeaux. It was a good diversified farm—wheat land, a vineyard, pasture, and woods. From the landing at the riverside its master could travel comfortably by boat to Bordeaux when he wished town life. In general he explicitly preferred the country, with its beauty, its quiet, and the pleasant round of visits.

Bordeaux, like most of the Gallic cities, was smaller than it had once been and was now fortified. The taste for town life which earlier had been somewhat artificially fostered had yielded to the enjoyment of a combination of town and country life. Bordeaux was now smaller, more crowded within its walls, and less pleasant.

“The Moselle” is the pleasantest of Ausonius’ poems. It is also the most original, for it is the first of those productions, literary and musical, in which a poet or a composer offers a river a song in its praise. The crystal-clear waters of Mosella move unhurriedly

through their pleasant windings, troubled by no rapids. From the deck of a river boat one can see the river's many kinds of fish moving about their leisurely business or observe the slight ruffles made by the current on the sandy bottom, the patches of under-water plants bowing gently to the movement of the water, or spots of moss set off by spots of gravel.

There is a steady traffic of these boats, either speeding downstream with the help of oars or being towed upstream. The edge of the river is clean and pleasant, without mud or reeds. The hills, covered with flourishing vines grown on terraces, rise so close to the river that the vinedresser may exchange unstudied pleasantries with the boatman passing by. The local lads, skillful in managing their light boats, make the river their chief playground, and the fisherman is always to be seen with his rod or his net. At one point the passerby is deafened by the noise of a water-driven mill which cuts the local stone for building purposes.

If he lifts his eyes up the slope of the hills, he may see stately and elegant mansions enjoying a fine view of the river and the countryside. Some of them have their own private baths down by the water. The poet's high compliment to this land of plenty is to compare it to the rich and well-tended lands of his native Aquitaine about Bordeaux.

Foreign affairs, our fourth problem, may well have been more difficult intrinsically than it had been in earlier times. Not only were the Persians more difficult neighbors than they had been before, but the arrival of the Huns in the vicinity of the Empire was an entirely new problem. The Huns caused great difficulties for the eastern part of the Empire and drove some Germanic peoples from the East to exert new pressures on the West. Lastly, the old German neighbors of the West, on the German side of the Rhine, seem to have increased their pressure. It has been conjectured that they felt a new pressure for living space caused by an increase of population. Be that as it may, they now wished to enter the Empire and join it instead of merely wishing to raid

it. The German attacks in the third century had chiefly been raids rather than attempts to settle within the Empire, although the German war of Marcus Aurelius in the second century started with a German request for lands for settlement.

It must be remembered that the Germans were not savages, in spite of the historians' habit of referring to them as barbarians. In spite of their fondness for war, during their more relaxed moments they did settle down and use the land for agriculture and cattle raising. Unfortunately their way of life required a considerable amount of land, the more so because their peculiar veneration for forests prevented them from clearing them. They had therefore come to a stage of land hunger in which they were eager to find land within the Empire for settlement. Even before the fourth century a good many of them had been given land by the Romans and in return had taken on the obligation of fighting for the Romans.

To absorb neighboring peoples was in the Roman tradition, and the Romans had had wonderful success at it. The Germans were willing to become good Romans according to their lights, but the difference in German and Roman ways was a great barrier. For centuries they had held with great tenacity to their own way of life, which possessed greater stability than the Greco-Roman way because of its greater simplicity, and was based on ineradicable personal loyalties rather than the Greco-Roman loyalty to the state. Some historians have said that they were incapable of being civilized; it would seem more just to say that they were civilized in their own simple way, but that they resisted precisely those more complex traits which made Greco-Roman civilization what it was.

The Romans dealt with the pressures from outside by their usual methods: by warfare, diplomacy, the payment of subsidies, and the enrollment of those neighbors who wanted to join them. The pressure was greater than ever before; but in most cases it was met successfully.

The fifth problem is that of the army. In one way the army of this period was as good as those of earlier periods—it could win both battles and wars. It is true that German invaders entered Gaul in large numbers, but they were ejected by Julian and later by Valentinian.

The army had become largely Germanized. A great many Germans (and other foreigners) were in its ranks, and the methods were in general those of the Germans rather than the old Roman methods, although there is reason to believe that there was more discipline and systematic practice for recruits than was usual among non-Romans. A good many of the higher officers were Germans.

All this does not mean that the fourth-century army was not efficient nor that it could not generally be trusted to do its duty and leave politics alone. It does mean that in the crisis of 406 and just afterward there was no sufficient reserve of trained citizen soldiers. This fact perhaps resulted partly from a shortage of manpower, but also it was partly the result of the fact that the great landowners sought to prevent their labor force from being drawn on for the army and often succeeded in doing so.

The French historian Piganiol gives the failure to insist on universal military training and service as the cause of the loss of the West. This view is too neat and clear-cut; at least the failure of the East and the West to work together must be added as another cause. The American historian Boak holds that the shortage of manpower was the explanation for the relaxation of the requirement of military service as well as for other practices of the period, such as the tightening of controls over the citizens. His general line of argument supports the view that the government was driven by the shortage of Roman labor for the farms to use non-citizens in the army rather than by its inability to enforce conscription, and that the government could generally assert its authority whenever it chose to do so.

Yet it must be noted that the East had a violent anti-German reaction which came to a head in the year 400 and it thereafter

operated with citizen armies successfully. Influential men had raised their voices there against the use of noncitizens, which would imply that they thought citizens could be found. In the West the author of *De Rebus Bellicis* advocated shorter terms of military service. His idea was partly that soldiers of long service and high pay were too costly, and he also felt that his plan would make it possible to train more men and build up a large reserve of trained men. He, too, apparently believed that citizens could be found for the army.

It cannot be said that an analysis of the government's management of affairs in the fourth century shows that the Empire was senescent. In this century there were no new problems or new responses to the usual problems which should be regarded as characteristic of senescence, or as indicating that the Romans were nearing the end of a cycle of some sort. The conditions of the fourth century grew naturally out of those of the third century (if we make allowances for the new pressures from the outside) and had nothing to do with senescence or a cycle. In fact, the five persistent problems of government were, as a whole, handled better than in the third century or even the first century.

How are all these conditions related to the loss of the West? The scholars who are working on this subject nowadays tend more and more to leave aside large generalities about all of Greco-Roman history and to concentrate on the facts of this period. Their efforts seem to be directed chiefly toward studying how it was that the invaders of 406 were able to get into Gaul and why the Romans were not able to eject them.

The Romans finally had to accept the situation, and gave the Germans a regular position in Gaul as *foederati*, or allies. Many other Germans had been settled in Gaul before, both as individuals and in groups. These new groups, however, were the ones who caused the process to get out of hand. There arose among them leaders who had unusual political wisdom for Germans, perhaps because they had acquired Roman advisers, and who slowly de-

veloped their groups so that they were able to dominate the much larger numbers of Romans in Gaul and lay the foundation of the modern nation of France.

The condition of the Roman army is recognized as one cause of the success of the invasion of 406 and of the failure of the Romans to eject the invaders. The mercenary armies of foreigners had often performed well. There was no sizable reserve of citizen veterans, however, something which the author of *De Rebus Bellicis* had called a *desideratum*. If ten thousand citizen veterans had been available in Gaul, it is possible that the invasion might have been prevented or the invaders might have soon been ejected.

The condition of the army was partly due to the government's inability or unwillingness to force the conscription of men who were engaged in farming, especially on the large estates. The government's need of money also led it to turn to the use of foreigners, who could be obtained more cheaply, while commutation money was paid for the Romans who did not join the army. Increasing familiarity with this way of doing things tended to make the government forget the disadvantages and dangers of it—especially the fact that it does not allow the creation of a pool of loyal veterans—until at last and too late there was a sharp reaction of feeling against it. But the revolts under Theodosius forced him to enroll even more foreigners to deal with the troops under the control of the usurpers.

Stilicho was the center of a complex of factors. He favored the ambitions of Germans for membership in the Empire. If he had been a better administrator, he might have been able to lessen the separation of feeling between East and West, which was partly his fault and partly not. If some of the best troops of the West had not been called away because of his contention with the East, the invasion might have been successfully foiled in spite of all other conditions. As it was, he either chose or was forced to ignore it at first and sent no help at all to Gaul. The exacerbation

of feelings led the East to look on without helping while the West suffered. Ironically, the character of Honorius, who succeeded Stilicho in 408, was another cause of the failure to eject the Germans. The rule of succession to the throne had been strictly observed and had brought to the head of the state a very poor specimen indeed, whose weakness and stupidity hampered the efforts of others to conduct the necessary operations.

It would have been entirely possible for the Romans to have gone on slowly absorbing Germans without letting the process get out of hand until a new situation was created in which in the West a combination of Roman and Romanized German strength was beyond any sort of attack from the outside. Had Theodosius left a strong son, that one change in the situation might have been enough to tip the balance at this point. Perhaps the army could have been restored to the old citizen system, as it was in the East. More sensible management would have avoided the breach between East and West which split the force of the Empire at the crucial moment. In the realm of pure chance, the Huns might not have arrived to increase the pressure on the eastern neighbors of the Empire, or the invaders of 406 might not have moved. What happened was by no means the inevitable result of the conditions of the time.

## XI *The Triumph of Christianity*

DURING the fourth century Christianity advanced from being a proscribed and persecuted religion to being the official religion of the Empire. Our interest is mainly in the question of whether the change was either a symptom or a cause of something which was to help to bring about the loss of the West. Did the official acceptance and promotion of Christianity do something to weaken the fiber of the Romans so that they could not go on as they had done before? Many historians have hinted that such was the case.

Constantine first proclaimed freedom of religion, giving the Christians complete liberty to worship as they pleased, in the western part of the Empire. Shortly before this, Galerius on his deathbed had made a similar proclamation in the eastern Empire. Since Constantine's Christianity dated from the famous battle in which he believed that the power of Christ had helped him to victory, he presumably conceived his plans for the comprehensive promotion of Christianity shortly thereafter. But being a good manager of men, he must have realized that such a change must be brought about by stages. The stages seem to have been three: first, until about 320, equal treatment for Christianity and paganism, which was, of course, a great improvement for the Christians; second, until about 330, increasing official favor shown to Chris-

tianity; third, until his death in 337, increasing official pressure against paganism.

As emperor he was the official head of pagan religion. He remained so even after he had become a Christian. To us it may seem impossible that a Christian could remain a pagan high priest. Not only did Constantine feel the need of moving gradually from one camp to the other, but also the two allegiances did not seem mutually exclusive, as they would to us. But as the years went on, he steadily moved to place the Empire openly under the protection of the God of the Christians and to suggest this protection by the government's propaganda.

To put the Cross on coins was a highly significant move. It was felt to have a magic power which could neutralize the power of other divinities, and its appearance on coins was a definite declaration that the government was now relying on this potent symbol. When Constantine himself was represented on coins or by statues, a suggestion of Christianity was always presented in his pose (the upward gaze to Heaven) or by some well-known Christian symbol.

The constant suggestion by all the usual means of propaganda that the Empire was now under the protection of the God of the Christians was only half of the process of bringing the government and the Church together. The other half was to put the Church to work as part of the political and social administration. In a way the Church was already part of the government, since by its nature it was a force in preserving order and in imposing a form on society. The Church had always performed its social function well in areas where the social working of the government was weakest, and especially among the downtrodden masses of the cities. Now the two organizations were happily united; the result must have been that in many places the fabric of society was both stronger and more continuous.

The conferment of judicial powers on the bishops was an important move. The dwellers in the city slums must have been

cheered by having bishops performing magisterial functions. In the smaller towns or in the country, where the Christians were relatively few in number, they and the non-Christians alike may well have been glad to have readily available courts of first instance in the person of the bishops. You must remember, of course, that every town which had even a small congregation had its bishop. As men of some education and executive ability they doubtless made good magistrates.

Some good diplomatic sense was shown on both sides. Constantine acted justly in restoring to the Church its confiscated properties and giving indemnity for damage and destruction to church properties. He exempted the clergy from the performance of the *munera* on the ground that their profession was one of public utility. This move doubtless won over to cooperation a great many Christians.

When he proposed to appoint Christians to high offices, such as governorships, the Church was called upon in its turn to show a little diplomatic sense, since up to now Christians had brusquely refused to take part in public life. The offers were to be accepted if the governors were allowed to refrain from non-Christian acts. Here the government was willing. It exchanged the old principle that all men must be willing to do homage to the emperor and to the pagan gods for a new principle that no Christian need either do such homage or compel others to do it. This arrangement meant, on the one hand, that the Christian community could now enter the active service of the government, and on the other hand, showed Constantine's estimate of the relative value of Christian cooperation and old patterns of loyalty.

Meanwhile what were the pagans doing? Apparently they still far outnumbered the Christians, but they varied greatly among themselves. Etymologically, "pagan" means a dweller in a *pagus*, or country district, and these were the people who were last touched by Christianity, remaining faithful to the simple worship of the spirits of the countryside. The first use of the word "pagan"

in the sense of "not Christian" comes from the reign of Valentinian, later in the fourth century.

Great numbers of the pagans adhered to the mystery religions, the worship of Isis or Mithras or the Great Mother. These religions had undergone the process which since the third century had drawn all forms of religion and philosophy somewhat closer together. They were religions of warmth and promise, yet not void of intellectual content. Some of the great nobles of Rome were proud to hold priesthoods in them.

The Neoplatonists, although they stood on a somewhat higher intellectual ground, were warm supporters of the old religions as manifestations of the good tradition handed down from the old days. Their acceptance of the old ways as guides for everyday conduct, combined with their lofty aspirations toward the highest spiritual attainment, allowed them to rally a large part of the forces of the Roman world in support of the best of paganism.

The state religion of Rome was still carried on, but had become an almost purely artificial religion—an established church, as it were, which had outlived its original meaning and value. Yet this system was not without its adherents. It symbolized the old Rome, an idea which had great practical force, and was the social and psychological support of the pagan aristocracy of Rome.

Probably the simplest pagans were little affected by the new alliance of Church and State. Indeed, news of it may have come with exceeding slowness down the side roads to the hillside farms. Those who were closer in touch with the current of events were bound to pay more attention. Many men must have become Christians simply for the worldly advantages which they could gain. Others felt a genuine hatred for Christianity, chiefly because it seemed to replace the old and familiar religious ways with something new and not better, and they offered whatever opposition they could.

The pagan aristocracy of the city of Rome were deeply concerned. The continued supremacy of the stately and elegant ap-

paratus of the old state religion symbolized to them the grandeur of Rome and their own social supremacy. The elevation of Christianity to a position of toleration and equality was bad enough. The further stages of special favor to Christianity and of hostility to paganism estranged them from Constantine. They were the only pagans who could offer any kind of effective resistance to the new religion. Their wealth and prestige made them better able to ignore the worldly advantage of becoming Christian. Their senatorial rank gave them some opportunities for opposing propaganda, as in the forms of the bronze coinage which the Senate controlled or in the form of statues which they erected.

Constantine would have liked full cooperation from the Roman senators in his plan of making his new capital, Constantinople, a Christian city. Their steady opposition seems at last to have made him decide that his new city would be a full-fledged "anti-Rome." Although there was a real need for another capital city at some strategic point between East and West, that city did not need to be so elaborate a counterpart of Rome as the new city was.

It was dedicated in the year 330 as a Christian city. Some members of the Roman Senate were induced to come there, and other notables were found to fill out a Senate which should grace the new capital. The city had many of the appurtenances of the old Rome, such as the seven hills and the fourteen districts and the golden milestone to and from which all roads led. Like the old Rome, it was adorned with plunder; many famous works of art were brought from places such as Delphi. The touch which makes us smile is that the new city also had to be provided with a populace which, like that of the old Rome, was to be furnished with bread and circuses.

This city on the site of the old Byzantium was to be one of the truly great cities of history. Its situation was excellent for administration, trade, and defense. From the beginning the city and the eastern Empire of which it was the capital were strongly Christian; the alliance of Church and State was established in

the East without difficulty and persisted. For a thousand years "Constantine's City" was the bulwark of the Greco-Roman civilization against the less civilized peoples of the East, preserving the values of that civilization until the time should come when the West was able to regain the Greco-Roman level.

The unity of the Church was now a concern of the emperor as well as of the statesmen of the Church itself. That unity was sorely threatened during much of the century. In North Africa a sect sprang up who were known as Donatists, from the name of one of their leaders. They maintained that those who had shown the white feather in the great persecution of 303-305 had thereby placed themselves outside the true succession of Christianity. The catchword was "*tradidores*," those who had handed over the sacred books on demand. The Donatists claimed that none of their bishops had weakened and that therefore they were the only true Christians in Africa. The facts seem rather to indicate that the whole Donatist movement started because the bishops of the province of Numidia were afraid of church discipline for their very poor showing in the hour of trial. It was not until after the time of St. Augustine, nearly a hundred years later, that the government and the Catholic Church managed to bring the Donatists back to Catholicism.

Constantine tried to heal this schism by his Imperial influence, but without success. At times the movement took on a nationalist coloring (it was confined to Africa), and at times it had aspects of a class struggle. For a whole century in Africa brother was turned against brother. Fortunately no harm was done to the structure of the Empire, although lives and property were wasted in some of the more overt struggles.

The schism caused by the Arian heresy had much more lasting results. This schism, which had to do with the nature of the Trinity, furnished Gibbon the opportunity for some of his most elegant sneers at the Christians. The great historian of Rome's later age, bemused by the recent internecine struggles of European

Protestantism and by the fancied enlightenment of his own time, leveled at the early Church a series of condescending reproaches for weaknesses which a more penetrating analyst might have perceived to be the common weaknesses of mankind.

The Fathers of the third century had wrought well in building up the difficult conception of the Trinity. There were those, however, who were dissatisfied with the nice arrangement which allowed Three to be One and One to be Three. Neat as this arrangement was, it was difficult to maintain the delicate balance. Some groups, such as the Sabellians, stressed God at the expense of the threeness of the Three. The Arians stressed the distinctness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the expense of the oneness of the Three.

The Arian heresy arose in Egypt, where theology was a heady draught. Arius and his opponents conducted their debate with such spirit and eloquence that the matter soon became not only one of prime interest to the theologians, but also the subject of irreverent topical jokes in the music halls. Before long the emperor realized that the theological arm of the government was bickering again. Knowing that the usefulness of the Church to the government depended on ecclesiastical unity, he called a council of bishops to meet at Nicaea, in Bithynia, to settle the matter.

The Nicene Creed of 325 A.D. testifies to the victory of the orthodox Trinitarian party at the council of bishops. This was not the end of the matter, however. Not only did the Arians remain recalcitrant, but they had stirred up a question which caused much soul-searching among the ostensibly victorious party. The unity of Catholicism and the end of Arianism were not achieved until nearly the end of the century, and there were even some Arian emperors. In the meantime the schism, like that of the Catholics and Donatists in Africa, had caused much bloodshed and destruction of property. It had also seriously lessened the usefulness of the Church to society.

Perhaps the strangest feature of the whole schism was that the great missionary, Ulfila, succeeded in making Arians of the Goths. Ulfila went to the Goths about the middle of the century and had a long career of missionary work among them. The Arian version of the nature of the Trinity may well have been better suited than the Catholic version for those who came from Germanic paganism to Christianity. A separate and subordinate son of a deity would have been more understandable to them than the subtler Catholic idea developed by and for people of much more education.

In all events, the Gothic peoples became and remained strong Arians. This raises an interesting point: those who have maintained that Christianity took away the fighting spirit of the Romans tend to forget that the invaders were also Christian. It can hardly be possible to maintain that Catholic Christianity does not produce as good soldiers as Arian Christianity. But in the fifth century, at a time when Catholicism had generally triumphed within the Empire, most of the Germanic invaders of Gaul were Arian. This difference helped to keep them separate from the Romans when they settled in Gaul. It also disposed the Catholic Romans of Gaul to support Clovis the Frank when, in 496, he left heathenism for Catholicism.

This schism may well seem to have concerned a trifling matter and to have been conducted with inexcusable inhumanity. The Greek letter *iota*, our letter i, has seemed to many people to represent the silliness of it all. The orthodox view of the nature of Christ was expressed by the Greek word *homos*, "same"; His nature is *the same* as that of God. The other view was expressed by the word *homoios*, "similar," which differs only by the addition of an *iota*; His nature is *similar* to that of God. The music hall comedians of the period could claim that the dispute was about an *iota*. Even now we say that something does not make an iota of difference.

Was the controversy so trifling? Were men killed over an *iota*?

We must remember that this was a basic matter to the participants. The nature of Christ lies at the heart of Christianity. Just as the pagans had treated the Christians inhumanly because they seemed to flout the basic values of pagan society, so now Christians treated other Christians with inhumanity because they differed on a basic question. This is not a matter for us to be condescending about. We might better sigh at the imperfection of human nature and go apart to re-examine our own treatment of our fellow humans.

The sons of Constantine—Constantine II, Constans, and Constantius—followed their father in his Christianity. During the period of their reigns, which ended with the death of Constantius and Julian's rise to sole control in 363, the Church continued to be vexed by the question which Arius had raised, and the Imperial government continually found itself embroiled in the quarrels of the subtle ecclesiastics. The East tended to cling to the Arian idea and the West to follow the decision of the Council of Nicaea. At times passions rose so high that there even seemed a possibility of war between the two parts of the Empire over this question.

Toward the end of the century the schism was gradually healed. Little by little a formula was hammered out which brought the Arians back to a belief in the Trinity as seen by the Catholics, the Imperial government furnishing some skillful and firm persuasion to help in the process. From then on only the Goths remained Arian.

Meanwhile the emperors moved in a slow and unsystematic way to cut the ground out from under paganism and make the whole Empire Christian. Although to us nowadays paganism hardly seems like a real religion capable of evoking stubborn loyalty, the fact is that the pagans could conduct rearguard actions for two hundred years more.

Constantine had confiscated the treasures of pagan temples and had openly neglected to perform pagan ceremonies which were

traditional with the emperors, but he had not attempted entirely to suppress paganism. In the year 356 the emperor Constantius issued an edict which forbade the celebration of pagan sacrifices and the worship of idols on pain of death, and ordered the immediate closing of the pagan temples so that deluded persons might not sin by going there.

The wording of this edict sounds as if the end of paganism had come. What followed is not entirely clear. A year or so later Constantius visited Rome for the first time—an experience which was deeply moving then, as now. He visited the public buildings and the glamorous spots of the city and talked with the senators. We do not really know, but it is a legitimate conjecture that the impact of the Eternal City with all its mellowed pagan glories was sufficient to make him quietly relax the rigor of his edict against paganism. At least there is evidence that the pagan circles of Rome took heart and showed new confidence at this time. There is no evidence that the death penalty of the edict of 356 was inflicted on recalcitrant pagans. A few years later Julian became emperor and a new phase of the process began.

We cannot make an old Roman out of Julian on the basis of his attempt to restore paganism, nor can we make him a defender of free thought and free speech. Julian was really only the champion of another system of thought, the Neoplatonic philosophy, which was very near to the Christian. It was not the old Hellenism that Julian would have restored, but a new Hellenism far removed from it.

It is interesting to compare Julian with St. Augustine. Julian asserts that the Romans became Greeks, meaning that they became devoted to Greek culture; Augustine asserts that the Greeks became Romans, meaning that they became part of the commonwealth which the Romans built. Julian's style and manner are mystic; we could never guess from his writings on religion that he had shown himself to be a very able soldier and administrator.

Augustine, despite his Christianity and the traits in his thought which were to be influential on the medieval mind, sounds far more like an old Roman than Julian.

Julian's opposition to Christianity was certainly different from that of the simple worshiper of the spirits of field and stream, nor was it that of the pagan aristocracy of Rome, deeply concerned with the stately ceremonies enacted at the city temples and the support of their own position by pagan tradition. Julian was a man of his own age, and his resentment against Christianity was like that of a great many men of the eastern part of the Empire who had been trained in the long Greek literary tradition, from Homer up to Neoplatonism.

From the various blasts at Christianity with which Julian solaced his scanty imperial leisure we gather that he found the Scriptures bare and inelegant, Christian theology confused and unsatisfactory, and the Christian life not as moral as it might be. But all his efforts, both administrative and theological, were doomed to failure. He died in 363 of a wound received in a war which should not have been undertaken. His ability and good intentions came to nothing because he lacked a thorough knowledge of the world, and his reforms pleased nobody.

Upon Julian's death his successor, Jovian, canceled all of Julian's attempts to set up an official paganism in place of Christianity. At Jovian's death, a few months later, his successors, Valentinian and Valens, proclaimed a complete toleration of all religious beliefs, although they were such firm Christians that they had refused to abjure their religion at Julian's command. Thus the situation returned to where it was when Constantine had proclaimed freedom of belief early in his career.

But Christianity was soon to gain complete control of the mind of the government. The affair of the Altar of Victory will serve to dramatize the process. This altar, and a statue of Victory with it, had stood in the Senate House since the days of the Republic. Every meeting of the Senate was opened with the burning of incense.

cense on the altar, and the senators took their oath of loyalty to the emperor before it. Constantius had had the statue of Victory removed; Julian had restored it. Gratian, when he succeeded his father Valentinian in 375, had the statue removed again. It is noteworthy, too, that Gratian was the first of the Christian emperors to refuse to act as Pontifex Maximus, or pagan high priest, and that he withdrew official financial support from the pagan cults in Rome.

In these actions Gratian may well have been prompted by St. Ambrose, who was then Bishop of Milan. It is certain that at that time Ambrose was the most active champion of the claims of Christianity. At any rate, the pagan members of the Senate were very much disturbed and in the year 384 they made a strong attempt to have the statue and the financial support of the cults restored. Ambrose brought strong and successful pressure to bear on the emperor and wrote an elaborate answer to the petition written for the pagan side by the senator Symmachus.

The arguments, unlike some of those used in contemporary debates between the pagans and the Christians, were on the highest plane. The plea of Symmachus for the restoration of the statue was both reasonable and eloquent. He appealed in the name of old Rome for the preservation of the Roman tradition, which to him was represented by this symbol of what Rome had done in the past. Ambrose, with less eloquence but with perfect courtesy, claimed to represent the party of modernism. The development of Christianity was a movement toward something better, he said, of a kind which had constantly taken place in the history of Rome. Why try to turn time backward to an age of less enlightenment, an age which had been only preparatory to the good of the present?

The arguments of Ambrose were soon reinforced by the poem *Against Symmachus* of the Christian poet Prudentius. Again we hear the note of modernity and progress. Whatever one may think of the argument that Christianity in the Roman Empire represented progress, it is plain that to the Christians of that time their belief

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was not one which bade them withdraw from human life to mope in corners, but one which gave them a feeling of new power and of movement toward something better.

Ambrose was to be heard from again. He was constantly active in the politics of the Church. His situation in the important city of Milan, one of the seats of the Imperial court, often brought him into contact with high officials or with the emperor or empress. He was influential in the final triumph of Catholicism over Arianism, as his friend and student Augustine was influential in its triumph over Donatism in Africa.

His most spectacular achievement was to force the emperor Theodosius to do penance for his brutal act of murdering 7,000 citizens of Thessalonica in reprisal for a riot. Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius to Communion until he should do penance. For seven months the contest between the temporal authority of the emperor and the spiritual authority of the bishop went on, and at last the emperor yielded.

Ambrose was no less spectacular in his discharge of another prime duty of the clergy, that of enlisting worthy followers and successors. By his example, his precept, and his exhortation he brought in St. Augustine, a man who was to be a more important Father of the Church than himself.

The proof of Augustine's greatness and richness of mind lies in the fact that his published work could be mined to provide the materials for other men's systems of thought. For us his work throws a sunny radiance on many a detail of life in the fourth and early fifth centuries.

He was born in 354 A.D. in the town of Tagaste, North Africa, where olives were grown on a large scale. His mother, now St. Monica, was a devout Christian; his father, Patricius, was not a Christian until later. From his earliest years his mother exerted all her influence to make a Christian of him. His father, if less articulate in his hopes for the boy, was equally earnest. The youngster,

after completing the local grammar school, was sent to the school of rhetoric in the larger town of Madauros, not far away.

Augustine had what middle-aged people in the middle of the twentieth century like to think of as a good old-fashioned boyhood in a small town. He was punished by his teachers for having played ball when he should have been doing his homework and felt aggrieved that his parents sympathized with the teachers rather than with him. Although his father was a hot-tempered man, the atmosphere of the home was one of love and sympathy. If the regulations of the Imperial government bore heavily on everyone, this family had learned (as most families did) to live with them and not worry about them.

Little pictures of everyday life constantly spring from the pages of Augustine's work. One evening, when he was about sixteen, he and the other boys played ball until it was too dark to see the ball. Naturally their joint impulse was to go somewhere else than home. They went over to a certain pear tree "near our vineyard" and shook it down thoroughly with the misplaced enthusiasm typical of sixteen-year-olds. Then, gathering as many pears as they could carry, they slid quietly away through the autumn dusk to eat them. This was undoubtedly a most reprehensible deed; but where, alas, are those sweet October dusks of the year when *we* were sixteen?

Patricius, realizing that he had a promising son, determined to make the effort to send him to the university at Carthage to train him for the intellectual life. The neighbors, most of whom had more money to spare than Patricius, shook their heads. It is too bad that the man could not have lived long enough to see his son assume his rightful place as the intellectual leader of a brilliant generation—but he died shortly after, having meanwhile become a Christian.

So Augustine went to the great city, where he had the joys of old-fashioned student life, as he had had those of an old-fashioned

boyhood. He excelled at his studies in literature and rhetoric. He joyously frequented the theater and talked in the taverns with his cronies until all hours. He became the leading spirit of a fraternity who called themselves "The Upsetters," conceiving it to be their mission to humble the younger students.

He also gained a personal knowledge of pride, the first of the seven capital sins, and of lust, the last, which was later to fill him with remorse and color his theological thinking. The sense of his own attainments, unchastened either by maturity or by Christian humility, issued in pride, and his father's and mother's intense natures issued in a lust which later horrified him. His knowledge of sin was later of value to him as a shepherd of souls; as a theologian he placed enormous emphasis on the need of divine grace to aid in combatting original sin. His prolonged and intense struggle against the view of Pelagius that man is not originally sinful and can find his way to God by reason alone was to influence all later Christian thought.

The whole career of Augustine illustrates the fact that in those days many men had as much freedom of movement as people have had in modern times, though many others were tied to their occupations. He returned from the university to set himself up as a teacher of rhetoric in his native town. Soon he felt ready to hang up his shingle in Carthage, where he again was successful. After some years he moved to Rome, a place where one could expect to find students drawn from the whole Empire. Again he did well, though he has recorded the fact that certain students had an unfortunate habit of disappearing when the term bills were due.

He entered a competition for the post of public instructor in rhetoric which had been arranged at the request of the people of Milan, a wealthy and brilliant place which was one of the seats of the Imperial court. His public oration was judged to be the best, and he went to Milan to take up this most desirable position.

He soon began to go to church there, not as a believer, for he

had been unable to overcome his philosophic doubts of Christian principles, but as a professional speaker seeking to estimate the performance of Bishop Ambrose. Deep called to deep; Ambrose won Augustine for Christ. By the force of his personality and by powerful and sincere argument he finally overcame the younger man's hesitation.

This was a real revolution. Augustine resigned his professorship at Milan and went home to North Africa to live in retirement and consolidate the revolution. But after a couple of years he found himself unable to resist a call to become a presbyter in the seaport of Hippo. Shortly thereafter he became bishop coadjutor, then bishop.

For thirty years, until his death in 429, Augustine was to perform the duties of bishop of Hippo and produce a series of important theological writings. Such works as *The City of God* show that he was addressing a public able to follow close and subtle arguments based on philosophical principles.

His minor works, the sermons for example, reveal by their references to daily affairs that life went on in much the same old way. There are a number of references to agriculture based on the old crops, wheat, the olive, and the grape, and it is plain that agriculture could still lead to comfort or to wealth. There were great houses of the sort that appear on mosaics excavated in North Africa, with elegant furniture and a host of servants. Augustine depicts the life of the businessman and trader as exposed to chance and the deceit of business associates, but capable of yielding good profits. As was natural for a preacher addressing a seaport congregation, he speaks often of the risks and profits of overseas trade. But the poor are always with us, and he speaks of them, too.

Goldsmiths and silversmiths and other artisans are a familiar topic with Augustine. The young of the better classes were still expected to work hard in school. The taste of the populace for the theater, horse races, gladiators, and fights with beasts was still in-

dulged. Moneylending and banking were recognized occupations.

Augustine speaks of the problem which arose when Boniface of Hippo, a rich shipowner, bequeathed his property to the Church. Here, for once, we can see the effect of the Imperial regulations. The man's properties were bound to the performance of the shipping which he did for the government, so the Church could not afford to become responsible for such a business venture, although it could accept ordinary legacies. In general, however, it may be said that the picture of life in North Africa might be that of an earlier age—even though the Vandals were in the land when Augustine breathed his last.

But to return to Ambrose, his influence probably had one more important effect: the emperor Theodosius issued an edict prohibiting all pagan acts of worship. Obviously the government could not prevent them all; but the temples were closed, and the ceremonies in public ceased. For one thing, this brought the end of the Olympic Games.

The Olympics, which were said to have begun in 776 B.C., had been held in honor of Olympian Zeus every four years from that time to 394 A.D. The splendid site of the Games, which was not a city, but what we should call an Olympic village, was now no longer frequented every fourth year by the throngs who came to watch the events and to worship. As the years went by, its glorious marble buildings and statues were quarried for material for forts or farmhouses, or burned down into lime for the soil. A time came when for a thousand years the very site was forgotten and no one knew where Olympia was, until in the eighteenth century the site was identified by curious antiquarians.

Theodosius' edicts seem to have stopped the public practice of the old pagan ceremonies fairly effectually—but they probably had no effect at all on private observances out in the country or behind closed doors in the city. These edicts did not stop paganism, for there is evidence that there were actively believing pagans for more than a century after this time in many parts of the Empire.

Their numbers dwindled slowly. The final blow to paganism seems to have been a series of edicts in 529 and after by the eastern emperor Justinian, which left little room for anyone to stay outside the fold of nominal Christianity.

We must now face the question whether the triumph of Christianity was either a symptom or a cause of the loss of something fine and irreplaceable in the Empire. To most people of the time the change must have seemed an easy and natural one which left life much as it had been before. Many of them may have had some regrets about the cessation of the pagan ceremonies. The ending of the Olympic Games, for instance, surely took some of the color and variety out of life. The Church had great skill and tact in such matters, however, and the process of changing the customary and beloved holidays into Christian holidays went on apace. The combination of horse racing, a track meet, and a great ceremony in honor of Olympian Zeus was perhaps a little too much to transform into a Christian ceremony.

The greatest objection to the change came from the pagan aristocracy of Rome, who felt their own status to be bound up with the pagan tradition, and from the educated classes who loved the Greco-Roman literary tradition. To both these groups Christianity represented an inferior rival which was likely, with Imperial help, to eclipse the tradition which they prized. The labors of some of the theologians of the fourth century did much to make these people feel that Christianity had acquired enough intellectual polish to be a gentleman's religion. They could further save their feelings by redoubling their zeal in cultivating the old literary tradition, thus assuring themselves that they were indeed the heirs of the best of paganism.

One naturally wonders whether the establishment of Christianity as the one acceptable religion meant the end of any sort of unfettered intellectual life. There had always been articulate leaders of the Church who believed that simple faith alone was best and that worldly education might even be harmful to a

Christian. This is an attitude which may be found at all times and in all places—the best way to prevent people from questioning the beliefs that the group finds important is to keep them ignorant of other possibilities.

This attitude was not characteristic of the Christians of the fourth century, but rather the exception among them. They assumed that the young would be trained on the great Greek and Roman writers. Those authors, such as Epicurus and Lucretius, who had denied that the gods exist or can influence the affairs of men were not forbidden, but the reading of them naturally was discouraged. The other Greek and Roman authors were still a liberal education for the young Christian. If he was raised on the best Greek and Latin authors except those who denied the gods, there is not the least need of our feeling sorry for him as one whose intellectual opportunities were restricted. Nor need we feel that the Christians had taken the salt and the savor out of the intellectual life.

The damage to the intellectual life was done by the slipping away of the West from the control of the Empire in the fifth century—not by the triumph of Christianity. Under the Germans, intellectual life gradually lost its vigor and educational standards declined. Christianity was not to blame. In the East, on the contrary, education and the intellectual life were kept at a high standard in a devoutly Christian community.

It is difficult to see how the new status of Christianity can have been any hindrance to the efficient management of the Empire, except insofar as trouble had been caused by schismatic struggles within the Church, which had largely ceased by the end of the fourth century. The time of noncooperation had gone; Christians were willing to hold office and to fight in the army. The Church, as a full partner with the government, may well have brought new strength to the Empire through its great power of integrating men into society.

## XII *The Working of Society in the Fourth Century*

IF care is taken not to push the comparison too far, the fourth century may well be compared to the nineteenth century in England. There had been no Industrial Revolution; there were no railroads and mills. However, there was a strong contrast between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many, as in the nineteenth century. Although no fourth-century Dickens recorded the miseries of the poor and the petty concerns of the lower middle class, there is plain evidence of the conditions that such an author would have made the substance of his books.

The more elevated areas of fourth-century society would have appealed to a Thackeray or a Trollope; they are surprisingly like those of the nineteenth century. There was an Imperial court in the background. There were great noble landowners—men like the younger Duke of Omnium—who took life very seriously and wished to justify their privileged position by public service. There were others like the elder Duke of Omnium, whose spirit of frivolity and lechery failed them only with their last breath.

There were merchant princes who owned no land and others who bought land for the sake of respectability and tried to marry off their daughters above their station. There were solid men who made their way by their own effort and ability, and hangers-on of the great who practiced the disgusting arts of servility. Rome, like London, was the great, dirty, rich, wicked city. The historian

Ammianus Marcellinus loosed a blast or two on this subject which Thackeray might well have envied.

To all these people money was a fascinating and cardinal subject, as it is to the people in the works of Thackeray and Trollope, even more than to the people of our commercial society. Perhaps the reason is that so many people of the fourth and nineteenth centuries were debarred by their station in life from earning money, yet had to have it.

In the law codes, the history of Ammianus Marcellinus, the letters of St. Jerome, the sermons and treatises of St. Ambrose, and the varied works of St. Augustine, many of the people of the fourth century pass before our eyes as types without names. The fourth century had both its Becky Sharps and its Helen Penden-nises. It had its dry and humorless intellectuals—earnest men like St. Jerome or John Stuart Mill—and other mellower characters to whom the world was good, like the poet Ausonius or Lord Tennyson.

Even within the Church we can see many types. Saint Ambrose, the great Bishop of Milan, was a real old Roman in his rugged ecclesiastical statesmanship. St. Jerome was one of the great scholars of the Church, a real ivory-tower scholar who preferred to work in secluded quiet. But beside such men we recognize the counterparts of the Reverend Obadiah Slope, insensitive parvenus whose pastoral visits were a sore trial to a lady. St. Jerome approved of a rule forbidding such ecclesiastical callers for widows and young orphaned ladies, whose households had no men. Many a saintly man moved farther and farther into the Egyptian desert so that he might not see the smoke from his neighbor's fire of dung-chips and might be alone to try to find his way to God. Many an eastern monastery, on the other hand, could muster a fine troop of husky louts if there seemed a prospect of a good riot—until the need for better discipline was met by St. Basil's excellent regulations. Of course the great majority of Christians were plain God-fearing people who were only trying to get along.

The fourth century, like the nineteenth, was an age of religious change and discussion. Scholars like to say that the fourth century was dominated by the Unseen, with the implication that it was a dream world in which men had turned their gaze away from reality. The fact is that most men were not in a position to turn their gaze from the insistent problems of this world to muse upon the next one. If some of them retired from the world, the phenomenon is not in the least abnormal, in that age or in any age. In general the men of the fourth century stayed firmly at their posts and carried out their duties.

It is sometimes said that the fourth-century approach to the Unseen was of an inferior quality as compared with that of earlier times. This is open to doubt. We tend to assume that the highest types of thought in Greece and in earlier Rome were typical; this assumption is incorrect. The elegance and elevation of Plato's thought were accompanied by the gross, earthy beliefs and disgusting practices of some of his contemporaries. The descriptions of the great rational philosophy of Epicurus betray the existence of the superstitions which it sought to combat. And if Christianity rests in the last analysis upon belief rather than on laboratory demonstration, so did every other attitude toward the Unseen in antiquity, from Plato's lofty philosophy to the lusty worship of fertility gods.

The amount of intellectual energy and ability displayed by the Christian writers of the fourth century is astonishing. Pure theology, their prime subject, was pursued with energy, force, and subtlety. The traditional oratorical techniques were successfully applied to sacred oratory. Poetry of a Christian inspiration made its appearance. If Ausonius' poem in praise of Christ was cold and unnatural, the hymns of Ambrose and the Christian poetry of Prudentius were full of warmth and genuine religious spirit. Stories of the lives of the saints began to challenge the romances of the pagan tradition.

The Christians accepted the riches of pagan liberal education for

their own elementary and intermediate education. The leaders of the Church were educated men who used the pagan classics familiarly, assuming that their readers would recognize and approve echoes of the great men of old. Cicero was an especial favorite. His writings on statesmanship were useful to a Church trying to re-cast its thought to meet its new Imperial responsibilities. Lactantius modeled himself so closely on him in his *Christian Training* that he was known as "the Christian Cicero." Ambrose deliberately echoed Cicero's *On Duties* in his *On the Duties of Priests*.

Augustine speaks often in his *Confessions* of the pagan authors, regretting the time that he spent on the more worldly of them. He gives a charming but rueful picture of his university days at Carthage, when, after an evening spent among the vanities of the theater, he and his cronies would roll arm-in-arm down the street lustily singing a popular aria from *Medea*. He stuffily disowns the generous tears which as a youth he wept for the death of Dido, that most unhappy queen. Yet he records that his reading of Cicero's *Hortensius*, an exhortation to the study of philosophy, was the beginning of his turning away from the vanities of the world to the things of the spirit.

It is Jerome, however, who gives the most vivid testimony to the attraction of Cicero. In one of his letters he records a dream of almost unbearable intensity. He seemed, he says, to be before the very Throne of Judgment. A great voice asked him, "Art thou a Christian?"

"Dear Lord, I trust so," he replied in fear and trembling.

"No!" thundered the voice "thou art a Ciceronian!" and a shower of blows descended on Jerome. He woke up sweating and panting and vowing never to touch those beloved volumes of Cicero again. He was horrified to find that he bore plain marks of a physical beating.

Although the work of the great Christian authors was well written and showed a sound acquaintance with the earlier authors who by this time had already become the classics, Augustine's

*Confessions* is the only book of the time which may be called a literary classic. From the purely literary point of view, apart from the theological, it can be said of him that, as with many modern novelists, his best book was the one in which he told the story of his own life. The Christian authors were in general technical writers, busy with the intellectual implementation of a great movement. The scholar may recognize the influence of their work, but the public now leaves them unread, as it does the other technical writers of antiquity.

The work of the Christian writers and scholars of this period had a profound influence on the writing of history. For one thing, the idea of progress originated with them. Before this time, men had conceived of history, broadly considered, as either an endless succession of events without a visible plan or as a series of cycles repeating themselves *ad infinitum*. Both ideas were repugnant to Christian thought, which was bound by its basic premises to view history as a progress to an ideal end. It was the struggle of the Christians to impose their own idea on history which started the idea of progress.

The idea of dividing history into periods, like the idea of progress, is perfectly familiar to us and taken for granted, but was unknown before it was developed by the Christian writers. The coming of Christ set a new stamp on human affairs. The years of our Lord were different from and better than the years before Christ. Thus history fell into two great periods, that before Christ and that after Christ. It was easy enough, once the idea of these great divisions had been established, to subdivide into smaller periods, and it was only natural to begin those periods with great events which disclosed new horizons as did the coming of Christ—for example, the discovery of America or the Industrial Revolution.

The Christian scholars also made great attempts to put historical chronology in order. They compared and combined the different systems which had been used—the Jewish, the Greek, the Roman,

and others—and made tables which showed the dates of well-known events according to a synthesis of all the major systems. Nowadays we take for granted the knowledge of chronology built up on the basis of their efforts.

The pagans, too, produced respectable scholars in this century. Donatus, the leading teacher of his time in Rome, produced a good commentary on the republican dramatist Terence and a Latin grammar which remained standard for centuries. The commentary of Servius on Vergil's works shows considerable learning and good taste.

It was only natural that art, as well as literature and scholarship, should be turned to Christian purposes. Since the Church had received legal recognition, it was now free to invest in large and costly church edifices; the techniques of constructing large buildings which had been developed for Imperial edifices were now applied to churches. The culmination of this development came in the East with the building of the great sixth-century Church of the Holy Wisdom (Hagia Sophia) in Constantinople, one of the major triumphs of all architecture. The minor arts, too, such as mosaics and ivories, found a new development in the service of Christianity.

Pagan and Christian art went hand in hand; but pagan literature reacted sharply against the Christians. The pagan literature of the fourth century is often regarded as the chief proof that the age was decadent. It is said to be a dreary and lifeless imitation of the earlier classics and to exhibit a strange frozen quality, as if men were listlessly repeating well-learned actions in a dream. The pagan writers were in fact anything but listless. They conceived of themselves as being engaged in a great struggle with the Christians, and indeed they were. As the Christians pressed boldly forward to turn the Empire into a completely Christian enterprise, the pagans fought a bitter rearguard action to maintain the old pagan tradition of Rome. If one reads their writings with no thought of the historical background, they may seem merely

to have echoed the older authors. Their own feeling was that they were keeping watch lest the old traditions fail.

Both parties to this struggle, the pagans and the Christians, were bred in the same literary tradition and knew their classical authors well. Both quoted them as we quote Shakespeare and the Bible (or did a generation ago), and could refer to their ideas without resorting to direct quotation. Both were using literature in a struggle to control the cultural tradition.

At some time in this century a series of biographies of the emperors was written which is now known to scholars as the *Historia Augusta*. The purpose of it seems to have been to glorify those emperors who supported the traditional pretensions of the Senate and to vilify those who opposed the Senate or especially supported the Christians. This was outright propaganda for the old tradition, conceived to be represented by the Senate.

There were other and more subtle ways, however, of defending the old tradition. The pagans read, studied, discussed, and edited the old authors. They quoted them, echoed them, and paraphrased them. We may take as an example a short passage from a poem by Rutilius Namatianus, an ardent supporter of the pagan tradition. The passage clearly echoes a famous passage in the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid* in which the imperial destiny of Rome is described. Other peoples are to excel in the minor fields of sculpture or astronomy or whatever the Greeks could do best; the Roman must remember that it is his to rule, to impose peace and order on the world. Rutilius clearly meant his readers to think of Vergil's passage as they read his own. He did not mean merely to offer an elegant reminiscence of a great author. His real meaning was that Rome, working in the old pagan tradition, had fulfilled the great destiny predicted for her in Vergil's poem and that her true greatness must be connected with this tradition.

The poet Claudian also glorifies the achievements of the pagan Rome. He was an Egyptian to whom Latin was an acquired language, but whose poetic technique in Latin was excellent.

"Rome alone," he says, "has taken the conquered to her bosom as a mother, not as a ruler, and has cherished the whole human race under one name. She has called the conquered her citizens and gathered them in the wide-flung net of her devotion. To her way as peacemaker we all owe the fact that the newcomer may live as if in his own land, that a man may change his home, that men may go to Thule for pleasure and penetrate what once was fearful wilderness, that we may drink of the Rhone or the Orontes, that we are all one people."

To Claudian, too, the virtues of the Roman way are inseparable from the old gods; he declares that Rome's great achievements were accomplished with and under the gods. The work from which this passage comes was written in praise of the deeds of Stilicho. The poet tried to celebrate the feats and character of a great man of the present in terms which would be reminiscent of the old Rome and its great men. Stilicho seemed to have admired the old Rome as much as any senator did; thus he could figure as a champion of the old way. The poem has fine parts, but is not great as a whole. It does show us something, however, of the profound sense of purpose which could animate the pagan poets of this time.

The Christians were not unaware of the meaning of these efforts and were as willing to meet the pagans in this limited sector of the field of struggle as in the other sectors. The poet Prudentius, for instance, in his *Against Symmachus*, argues with skill and vigor for the Christian view that the old greatness of Rome was only preparatory to the new Christian greatness. Saint Augustine, in *The City of God*, met the pagan charge that Rome's recent troubles, and especially Alaric's sack of the sacred city, were due to Christian rule and Christian neglect of the pagan gods. When Ambrose echoed Cicero's book on duties in his own book on duties, his intention was not mere literary reminiscence, but to suggest to the mind of the reader who knew his Cicero that the old Roman conception of the duties of a Roman gentleman had

been made out of date by the new conception of the duties of a Christian. In general the theologians made such a great effort to unite elegance and sound philosophical reasoning that many pagans dropped their charges of crudity and inelegance and joined the Christians.

There remains one more way in which we can examine the Empire of the fourth century more deeply still to see whether we can find any trait clearly indicative of ill health and premonitory of decay and dissolution. This is to examine it as a working society, to try to determine whether it was organized and operating so as to give its members those things a sound society must give.

A working society must protect its members. The most spectacular aspect of this function is protection from foreign attack and conquest. The Empire of the fourth century probably discharged the function of protection worse than it did any other function. The pressures from the outside were very heavy, but the fourth-century Empire had inherited a military system which, if it were well managed, was adequate for dealing with them. Some damage was done to the military establishment by quarrels over the succession to the throne. More damage, perhaps, was done by the unwise of the government in not keeping up a citizen army and in allowing the two halves of the Empire to be so at odds that they did not cooperate in the military sphere.

The result was the successful invasion of Gaul in 406 which did in fact lead to the loss of the West. Yet, as we have shown, the governmental function of protection against outside enemies was not so poorly discharged that disaster was inevitable. It is a significant fact that the eastern part of the Empire was able to reform its military system about 400 with respectable success; the West waited until too late.

Another aspect of this function is the protection of members of society from each other, whether by means of a system of law

for adjusting conflict of interests and punishing crimes or a system for the protection of the weak against the oppression of the strong. This last task was especially badly performed. The *curiales* treated the little people of their districts harshly, great land-owners pressed hard upon small landowners to get their land away from them, officials were often corrupt, and the emperors themselves—Valentinian, for example—sometimes oppressed and robbed the great landowning nobles.

If the pressure of the strong upon the weak is regular and according to a recognized system, it may be tolerable. When it takes irregular, violent, and corrupt forms, it becomes intolerable. The structure of the Empire was weakened by this evil, though perhaps only slightly. The people called Bagaudae in Gaul and other such groups were driven from the soil to the ancient equivalent of Sherwood Forest by the pressures exerted on them from above. There are specific cases of people who were driven out to live and work among the barbarians, even among the Huns, by the rapacity of the Imperial officials.

The harshness of the penalties which the codes prescribed for official misconduct shows the gravity of the situation. To remedy such a situation is difficult; but it can be done. Augustus did it in a comparable situation long before. Julian made a good start during his brief reign. But now official exploitation was not curbed. Regrettable as this was, there is no way of showing that it was a cause of the loss of the West.

The second function of a working society is to nourish its members. This implies not only the physical sustenance of the individuals who make up the society, but the sustenance of the necessary government. We have no good reason to suppose that the soil was exhausted or that agricultural methods had lost anything in efficiency as compared to those of earlier times. The government, however, was much more of a burden on the economy and was sustained only with some difficulty, especially since the military problems were more difficult than before. Yet,

with all the difficulties, the society of the fourth century did nourish its members.

A society must also reproduce. The wars and the plagues of the third century must have caused a decrease in the population which was felt through all or most of the fourth century, but it still is an open question whether a shortage of manpower in the fourth century was a major factor in bringing about the loss of the West. The use of barbarians instead of citizens in the army does seem to have contributed to the loss of the West. Was that practice caused solely by a shortage of manpower? At least the author of *De Rebus Bellicis* and other writers of the time who discussed military affairs seem to have assumed that there was enough citizen manpower for the army if it were properly used. The eastern Empire did manage to return successfully to a citizen army just at the time when the West was having its greatest difficulties.

But was there a faint and deadly miasma in the air at this time which the mystically-minded historian can detect without being able to name? Although this matter is very little understood, it would seem that such a miasma would have been the result of the failure of one or both of two other functions of society which operate in the nonmaterial sphere.

These two functions of society are less obvious than the three just discussed, but no less important: the society must create a sense of status for its members, and it must create a system of both ideal and practical goals which will give meaning and purpose to life.

The first three functions are better understood than the latter two, and the consequences of failure are easier to see. If the Romans failed to protect their people, the barbarians would invade. Ancient history is full of data on government anxiety about the food supply. The measures of Augustus to encourage marriage and the rearing of children are well known. But the measures taken by the society of the Empire to fulfill the fourth and fifth

functions, to build up a system of status and a system of goals, have received less attention and the consequences of failure in these two fields are not as well understood.

A successfully working society must provide its members with a place, or status, to give them a definite sense of belonging. There are, of course, a number of ways in which this can be done. The family is a tried and true means of conferring status. Membership in a religious organization is another. Membership in a community and membership in an economic organization are others. Not only must there be certain well-understood kinds of status, but the boundaries of them must be reasonably definite, so that a man may know when he has achieved an advance in status—for instance, in Rome it might be by becoming a member of the equestrian or senatorial order. Enormous amounts of energy can be wasted in struggles over status which is not well defined, as happens in the United States.

The Roman society, like all strongly traditional societies, always had had a strong and definite system of status. The government of the second century showed a high degree of imagination and skill in adjusting the system so that the provincials might acquire a strong sense of belonging to the Empire. In the fourth century there were two great changes which meant a readjustment of the system—the change to official Christianity and the increasing degree to which men were fixed in their occupations and activities.

Neither of these changes was such as to harm the system of status to any degree. The change to Christianity was so slow as to allow room for adjustments where necessary. The average man of the fourth century could accept Christianity without undergoing hardship. Many of the very humble found a new status in the bosom of the Church.

The clearest negative reaction to the new position of Christianity was that of the pagan senators, who because they held senatorial rank could not be directly penalized for their paganism. They drew together to defend the traditional system upon which they con-

ceived their status to rest, and impassionately defended the old literary and cultural tradition of Rome, because that tradition seemed to them to be the source of a dignified status which they saw slipping away from them under the new dispensation.

Many historians, following the assumptions of our open society, have asserted that the society of the Empire could not be healthy and vigorous if so many men were fixed in their places in society and their sons fixed there after them. This matter has been little investigated and is little understood. There is reason to believe, however, whatever the preferences of our society may be, that a society need not be either unhealthy or lacking in vigor because of the fact that many major choices of the individual are made for him either by law or by custom.

We may conclude, then, that the system of status may actually have been in better condition during the fourth century than it had been before, rather than in worse condition. This was an element of strength, since the vigor of a society depends to no little extent on the individual's being able to go about his business without the struggles and worries which result from uncertainty as to status.

The fifth function of a working society is to provide its members with a system of both ideal and practical goals, with something to give meaning to life. Human nature being as it is, people who cannot conceive that anything beyond and above themselves is of any importance are not likely to be useful to themselves or to their fellows. Such people will probably fail in energy.

Christianity was so organized as to offer men an end beyond themselves better than the pagan religions had done. Thus it made a great contribution to the body social. If it exalted the values of the other world, it still fortified the inhabitant of this world. As it gradually became the dominant religion, it took on the responsibilities which went with that position by encouraging its members to accept worldly burdens. If some Christians withdrew to the monastic life, at least the late fourth-century statesmen of the

Church saw to it that such communities became productive and well regulated. The ideal ends of the Christians certainly differed from those of the pagans. There is no reason, however, why all members of a healthy society must have the same ideal goals.

The Empire itself was both an ideal and a practical end which could appeal to the great masses of the citizenry. It was both a symbol and a necessity. *Romanitas*, "the Roman way," symbolized peaceful and organized life, even among the storms and stresses of this time. Men felt that it represented something not to be found elsewhere and that it must be preserved at any cost. Many even of the barbarians felt the force of *Romanitas* as an ideal.

We do not find the conditions, then, that would have caused the subtle and deadly miasma which historians have so often assumed. There was no failure of function in the society of the fourth century. Of the five functions of a working society, the faults and failures of the Roman society were only in the field of protection of its members. There was no decline in the general quality of the performances of the members of the society.

The Empire was not a helpless and tottering organism waiting for the *coup de grace*, but an organization which had recovered from the terrible troubles of the third century and was working along new lines under enormous pressures from the outside. We can see how a combination of those pressures, of contingencies, and of mistakes did lead to the loss of the West.

There was no falling-off in the quality of men caused by some mysterious logic of history. There are no phenomena in the fourth century which should be called characteristic of old age, even if it were proper (which it is not) to make an analogy with biological organisms. There was no "failure of nerve." The whole process may be described by ordinary historical methods.

## XIII *“The Fall”*

THE loss of the West began with the Germanic invasion of 406. The four invading peoples spread out, ravaging and plundering. In their wake came an invasion of the Burgundi, who were eventually to settle in the region now called Burgundy, and new groups of Franks, who settled in northern Gaul.

The British commander, Constantine, crossed to Gaul to help in the defense of the province, leaving Britain undefended. His troops were not sufficient, nor did he find enough soldiers who could be rallied from the shattered Gallic army, which had been weakened beforehand by the transfer of many units to Italy. He did check the invaders somewhat, and some of the cities managed to hold out as the Germans swirled past them.

Stilicho, who was intent on his struggle with the eastern part of the Empire, at first sent no help at all. When Constantine had himself proclaimed emperor in Gaul, Stilicho tried to arrange to send a barbarian mercenary army against him, but was unable to complete the arrangements. Then he formed a plan to send Alaric and his Visigoths against him, but the plan came to nothing, chiefly because Stilicho was charged with treason for having allowed the invasion of Gaul. Resentment over the fate of Gaul brought the anti-German reaction in the West to a head, and Honorius had Stilicho executed in 408.

After so much damage had been done in so short a time, Honorius fortunately was able to find a competent general, Constantius, to send to Gaul to take charge of affairs there. Had a man of the caliber of Constantius been emperor since the death

of Theodosius, an enormous amount of damage to the Empire might have been averted. As it was, with only the battered forces of the West at his disposal, he began a skillful job of patching up the damage as best he could.

Meanwhile Alaric and the Visigoths became embroiled with the government in Italy again and caused further damage. Alaric had been trying to gain a recognized position and territory within the Empire for his people. They often had been employed as soldiers; but they wished to have some territory on which they could settle. Since the original failure of the project to settle them within the Empire, a failure which led to the battle of Adrianople, they had been so troublesome (and the government sometimes so deceitful) that no arrangement of this kind had been made. Now Alaric, thoroughly disgusted with his treatment, made new and strong demands. The negotiations ended with the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410.

The sack of Rome does not represent the definite fall of the Empire, often as the event and its date are mentioned in accounts of the period. It was a costly raid which damaged Roman prestige; but it was essentially only a raid. Alaric led his people, laden with their booty, to southern Italy. There he built a fleet with which he intended to cross to Africa, a rich grain land which he thought would serve as a home for the Visigoths. But the fleet was destroyed by a storm, and Alaric died soon after.

He was succeeded by his brother-in-law Athaulf. Athaulf once said that he had often dreamed of the establishment of a great Gothic kingdom, but had been forced to conclude that his people did not have the necessary qualities, so that the best thing for them to do was to give up the idea of "Gothia" and support the Roman Empire, "Romania."

In 412 Athaulf took the Visigoths to Gaul in the service of Honorius. But he was refused the recognition which he had bargained for and he led his people to Spain, where he was murdered and succeeded by Wallia. Wallia tried, as Alaric had

done, to cross to Africa; again the combination of storms and lack of seamanship defeated the project. Constantius, seeing his opportunity, offered him supplies of food if he would move against the peoples who had invaded in 406 and were now all in Spain. Wallia accepted and thoroughly defeated the Siling Vandals and the Alans; the Asding Vandals and the Suevi were recognized as allies and given a formal grant of lands in Spain, and the Visigoths were given part of Aquitania, in southwestern Gaul.

Constantius had more or less stabilized the situation in Gaul, although with far more difficulty than this much-simplified account would suggest. Part of that difficulty was caused by Honorius' inept participation. Constantius had restored the authority of the government, but at the cost of a fair amount of territory which he granted to the Germanic peoples. An old principle, that of *hospitalitas*, had been adapted. The word had formerly been used to describe the quartering of troops or officials on the population. Now it meant that parcels of the land were taken from Roman owners and assigned to the newcomers.

In principle this arrangement need not have been disastrous. The revenue from the lands granted to the Germans was lost to the government, since they held the land as allies (*foederati*) responsible to the Roman government only for military service and only through their kings. Yet the Germans were few in number—so few, indeed, that they could never have scored such successes but for the mistakes of the Romans. Constantius may well have felt that his arrangement had brought a new and vigorous element into the population of Gaul and one which was ready and willing to fight for the Empire. He could not have foreseen that presently leaders of quite un-Germanic political ability would arise, especially among the Visigoths and the Franks.

For the present the trouble was that the newcomers were not assimilated. They were vigorous people of a foreign stock who admired the Empire and its organization and wanted to live inside it, but that did not dream of giving up their own rather

different organization. Scholars who have studied the difficult question of Germanic organization believe that the land in the Germanic countries just outside the Empire had been becoming more and more heavily populated in the preceding centuries and that this was the reason for the steady pressure of the Germans to get inside the Empire and stay, rather than to raid it and return home as they had done before. The arrival of the Huns in the territory above the Danube had also, of course, lessened the amount of land available for other people.

It might have been desirable to acquire this new strain of population had it been possible slowly to assimilate the Germans and make them Romans as had been done with many other peoples, but the stubborn preference of the Germans for their own social values and the fact that they were admitted in large homogeneous groups was bound to raise difficulties. By 423 there were five Germanic kingdoms in the West—the Vandals and Suevi in Spain, the Visigoths in Aquitania, and the Burgundians and Franks in other parts of Gaul. All these peoples were willing to derive their power from Imperial recognition and to fight for the Empire. They were also ready to fight with each other when it seemed desirable to do so, and their energy was such that they could hardly have been expected to remain forever within the bounds which the Romans had set for them.

Why were the Romans not able to retrieve the situation, since they had in the past repaired even greater difficulties? Had they kept up their universal military service and found a strong emperor to deal with the situation, they might well have done so. Had they not been late in perceiving that they had departed dangerously far from the old methods of absorbing other peoples, they might have acted more prudently. But as things were, the Romans were forced to receive into Gaul groups of foreigners who were used to living by an alien economic and social system, who did not pay the usual taxes on the land they occupied, and who had done great damage in the process of joining the Empire.

Gaul and Spain were not ruined, to be sure, but they were much less of a source of strength to the government of the West than they had been. Sometime in the first half of this century Britain was permanently lost to the Empire; exactly when is a subject of scholarly debate.

It must be remembered that during this time the East had suffered no comparable damage. The Huns had caused it considerable trouble, but it had lost no important territory, was economically fairly sound, and had restored the citizen army of other days. One of the most able of the scholars who have worked on this period, Norman Baynes, asserts that the reason why the eastern, or Byzantine, Empire was able to protect its integrity at this time and go on, while the West gradually slipped into the hands of the Germans, was the superior wealth of the East. The East, he said, had more population and was better developed economically; the mere fact that Rome and Italy were in the West should not cause us to overlook the fact that the West, considered as a whole territory, had never reached the level of development of the older regions of the East. Once the Empire had gotten into the unfortunate position of acting as two practically separate halves, the West was the weaker area.

The years between 423 and 476 saw a further great weakening of the Empire in the West. In 429 the Vandals were invited to cross from Spain to Africa by Boniface, the Roman governor there, whose personal ambitions had involved him in so much trouble with the government at Rome that he needed any help that he could get. The prospect of living in a rich grain country easily persuaded the Vandals to make the change, and, as might have been expected, once across the water and in Africa they speedily made themselves masters of much of the country. In 435 the government felt obliged to make a treaty which gave them the same *hospitalitas* in Africa which they had before enjoyed in Spain. The eastern Empire saw itself threatened by the presence of the Vandals in the strategic territory of Africa. An expedition

was sent against them, but without success, and in 442 they were recognized as independent and as full masters of Africa.

The loss of this rich territory was probably the sorest single blow which the Empire suffered during all this troubled time. Not only did the Vandals have at their disposal the men and the material wealth of Africa, which they were to control until the Byzantine reconquest of 533, but they set themselves up as the original Barbary pirates. With their fleets they made commerce in the Mediterranean extremely difficult and carried out raids on the south coast of Europe.

The greatest of these exploits was their descent on Rome itself in the year 455. This was a large-scale robbery and little else. Like the other raids, it was designed to augment the material resources of the Vandal kings. The city was systematically looted of everything capable of being carried off by the robber expedition. This was only one of many raids. Yet all the raids may have caused less economic loss than that caused by Vandal depredations among the peaceful traders trying to use the Mediterranean as a highway. Some scholars believe that international trade about the Mediterranean never recovered entirely from the dislocation caused by the piracy of the Vandals. Others believe that it was not seriously harmed until the early 700's, when the Moslems came to dominate all of North Africa, Spain, and the Mediterranean waterways.

Meanwhile, the Romans were still nominally in control of Gaul, but only by means of the employment of Hunnish mercenaries, for the new members of the Gaulish society were not all peaceful. Nevertheless life went on in Gaul with some resemblance to the old life, in spite of occasional warfare, but with even more resemblance, as a great historian of Roman Gaul has said, to the life of the time before the Romans conquered Gaul and made it a province.

The most spectacular event of this part of the century was the great battle with Attila's Huns in 451. This has been called one of the decisive battles of the world. It was brought on, curiously

enough, by the fact that Honoria, one of the Imperial princesses, feeling that her great political abilities had little scope, managed to convey a request to Attila that he would help her to have more influence in the Roman government. He chose to interpret the message as a preliminary proposal of marriage and accepted it as such. He then marched west to claim his bride and her dowry, which he asserted was Gaul.

Aeetius, who held the title of "patrician" (something like "governor extraordinary of Gaul") had long used his old friendship with the kings of the Huns to draw mercenaries from them. In this emergency, where obviously he could not use Hunnish mercenaries, he managed to draw some soldiers from the Romans of Gaul and to make hasty arrangements for defense with the Franks and Visigoths of Gaul. The Huns suffered great losses in the battle, but were allowed to withdraw. On their way back to their kingdom north of the Danube they turned down into North Italy, but they were induced to leave, perhaps by the intervention of the Pope or perhaps because of pestilence and lack of food.

Shortly thereafter Attila died. At his death a typical weakness of barbarian kingdoms became apparent: the kingdom of the Huns fell apart, and the Germanic peoples of the Danube region inflicted a terrible defeat on them in 453 which brought about the end of their power. This actually was a more decisive battle than the battle of 451.

The government of the western Empire in Italy, now greatly weakened by the loss of so much of its territory and revenue, had fallen into the hands of the German Masters of the Soldiers, the commanders of the army. They became the creators of the emperors, since tradition was so strong that even the commanders of the army, being Germans, did not dare to try to assume the throne themselves. Some of their creations they found too strong to be manageable, whereupon they got rid of them, and some they found so weak that they were ridiculous, whereupon they deposed them. All this time the authority of the emperor of the East was

nominally respected, and nominally the emperors of East and West shared the authority in the Empire.

The year 476 has often been given as the date of the fall of the Empire in the West. In that year the emperor Romulus Augustulus was deposed by the German Odoacer, commander of the army in Italy. But many scholars believe that what happened in 476 need not be taken as symbolic of a fall. Romulus Augustulus was a usurper; he had driven out Nepos, who was sent by the eastern emperor to rule Italy. Odoacer had been raised to a good bargaining position by the demand of the soldiers in Italy that they, too, should have *hospitalitas*, as did the Germans in other western provinces. He negotiated with the emperor in the East for recognition, and was granted it, with Augustulus relegated to obscurity and Nepos still nominally emperor of the West. So Odoacer ruled in Italy for some years as the agent of the eastern emperor, who was fully recognized as the head of the Empire. The emperor was satisfied by the *de jure* recognition that his former nominee, Nepos, ruled the West, although he was really living in retirement in the East.

Yet those historians who regard the year 476 as the year of the fall of the Empire in the West have something of a point. Although Odoacer recognized the authority of the emperor in Constantinople, he was still only the commander of the German soldiers assigned to the defense of Italy. Africa had been lost to the Vandals, and Gaul and Spain were under the *de facto* control of the German kings there. So when Italy came under the control of Odoacer, it may in fact be said that the former Roman type of government in the West had disappeared. The recognition of Odoacer, different though it was from an event such as the fierce defeat and annihilation of the Assyrian nation in 612 B.C., still does in a way mark the fall of the Empire in the West.

Presently it occurred to Zeno, the eastern emperor, that he might rid himself of the troublesome king of the Ostrogoths, Theodoric, by sending him to Italy to replace Odoacer. Theodoric, after some

years of campaigning, did overcome Odoacer, and the Ostrogoths were settled in Italy under his leadership. Now Italy was to be under the control of the Ostrogoths for four decades, until the great Byzantine effort to bring the West back under its control.

The Ostrogothic control of Italy was far from being a calamity. It really was a continuation of the governmental and social system under which Italy had lived for a hundred years, except in the fact that the Ostrogoths took a third of the land for their own use. The Roman and the Ostrogothic populations were kept apart, living together in Italy as two separate nations which did not intermarry. Theodoric regarded himself as ruling Italy in the name of the emperor at Constantinople and was very solicitous to preserve all the forms of the Roman government.

The Germanic peoples in Gaul were less inclined to strictly observe the old ways, and here we come plainly to the beginnings of the nations of Europe. The Visigoths and Franks had gradually encroached on the Roman territory. In 496 Clovis the Frank, a shrewd and ambitious man with much natural ability in government, became a Catholic. Previously he had not been an Arian Christian, as were the Visigoths, but a heathen. The division between the Arian and the Catholic branches of Christianity was a real one and one which was felt even more than differences of racial or national origin. By his conversion Clovis acquired the powerful support of the Catholic clergy and population all through Gaul. With this added to the formidable fighting force at his command he was able to overcome the Roman territory in the middle of Gaul which remained outside the Germanic kingdoms, and finally to overcome the Visigoths in 507. It is interesting that even after he had united the various groups of the Franks, had defeated the West Romans and the Visigoths, and had laid the foundation of the greater Frankish kingdom, Clovis was glad to make a token acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the emperors of Rome and Constantinople. The fact was, nevertheless, that the West had finally been lost.

In 527 the great Justinian ascended the throne at Constantinople. His ambition was to bring all the territory of the old Rome firmly under his control. He began by sending his famous general Belisarius to Africa with a small but efficient force. The Vandals were quickly conquered, and Africa, with its highly important natural wealth, was to remain under Byzantine control for a hundred years thereafter, until it fell to the Moslems.

Now the Byzantines turned their attention to Italy. They and the Ostrogoths fought up and down the peninsula until Italy was ruined. Although Rome remained the seat of the Papacy, it had suffered great material damage in the war and was not to be restored to anything like its old glories for a good many centuries. The power of the Ostrogoths was broken, and when the Lombards invaded Italy later in the century they were unable to help defend the land. The Lombards conquered a portion of Italy; they and the Byzantines divided the country in a kind of checkerboard pattern.

Still the hope of a united Empire was not shattered until the seventh century, when a new movement of Slavs from central Europe occupied the Balkan region, and cut off land communication between Italy and the East. Then in the mid-600's the great new movement of Islam began, in the East, and this was to occupy all the attention and strength of the Byzantines for some time. The Moslems put the eastern Empire on the defensive in its home territory of Asia Minor. They took Egypt, then North Africa, and in 711 completed their conquest of Spain. East and West became separated, with only rare communication, since the Moslems practically controlled the Mediterranean. The new nations of the West, which were to become France and Italy, were largely left to their own resources.

## XIV *Culture in the Time of Change*

THE civilization of the eastern, or Byzantine, Empire, continued to advance during the fifth and sixth centuries. It was, first and foremost, a Christian Empire, and had been so since the dedication of Constantinople in 330. Whatever one may think about the union of Church and State, such a partnership has often proved itself capable of producing a very sound social fabric, not only in such great highly-civilized states as Byzantium, but also in certain far simpler civilizations (that of the Zuni Indians, for instance) which the anthropologists have taught us to appreciate as well-organized and successful societies. The great strength of the Byzantine Empire is shown by the long and stubborn fight for survival which it waged against odds often greater than those which had prevailed in the West.

In the long run the Byzantine government did prove itself capable of governing, in spite of periods of weakness and of shameful corruption. The techniques of production and distribution were maintained. The high intellectual tradition of the Greco-Roman civilization was largely directed into religious channels, but its secular form was not allowed either to die out or to degenerate. Although no masterpieces of belles-lettres were produced, education was prized, writing was competently done, and the best Greek work of the old days was familiar to many. Justinian's codification of the Roman law gathered together the great legal

heritage of Rome, later to be transmitted to the states of modern Europe. The art of the period was full of vitality and was of a high degree of excellence.

Although the long connection of East and West was now being weakened and was presently to be at an end, the effects of the union on both parties had been great. When the Byzantine Empire returned to being a Greek and eastern sort of civilization, it took with it the best that the Romans had to give to the world—the Roman genius in the art of government, brought to maturity by the Roman opportunity for testing and refining that genius in the world's first attempt at a commonwealth of nations.

The West had borrowed from the East every imaginable kind of cultural good, from the Greek high intellectual tradition to methods of agriculture and weaving. Scholars used to think of this as purely imitative borrowing, especially in literature, perhaps because the German scholars of the last century liked to think that only the Greeks and Germans were great creative and originative peoples. But more recent scholarship has come to realize that everything which the West borrowed was put through a process of domestication which somewhat changed its nature. Although the peoples of the West were undoubtedly less creative than those of the East, they were able to adapt and transmute what they took.

This borrowing was not a simple process, done once and for all at a certain time. People, language, ideas, and methods of doing things were in constant circulation through the Empire. In the fifth and sixth centuries, however, the tendency of the two parts of the Empire to draw apart caused a perceptible slowing down of this process.

Though the eastern Empire went on successfully, civilization in the West suffered a serious decline during the time when the West was slowly falling under the control of the Germans. This was not the decay of senescence. It was the sort of decline which any large organization would suffer if it gradually fell under the

control of a new group of people who, while admiring its traditions and methods, were not capable of keeping them up-to-date and alive, and were gradually cut off from enlivening contact with other similar organizations.

German society was not based on the supremacy of the state and the orientation of the individual toward the state, as was the society of the Romans. The German system was a simpler one, a stage through which the Greeks and the Romans had passed long before, in which the family and the clan were still very important social units, and loyalty was owed rather to the person of the king than to the king as the symbol of the state.

However much the Germanic peoples admired the Empire, thought its continuance necessary, and were willing to fight for it, their organization as separate entities within the Empire was bound to cut at the roots of its structure. The Ostrogoths, for instance, made great efforts to preserve the government and organization of Italy exactly as it had been, but they themselves stayed strictly apart and did not enter into the Roman inheritance in any way.

The Germans had very little of their own to contribute. The later history of the Vandals will demonstrate this. From 429, when they crossed from Spain to Africa, until the Byzantine reconquest in 533 the Vandals were masters of Tunisia and much of the adjoining areas. They were largely cut off from contact with the rest of the world by their own piratical attitude. What was the cultural result in Africa of their stay of a century? None. We know of not a single cultural trait of the Vandals that so impressed itself as to survive, whether social organization or language or weapons or clothing or burial customs. If the great Byzantine effort at reconquest had succeeded in Italy and Gaul and Spain as it did in Africa, we might well find that in those countries, too, the coming and stay of the Germans was only an episode of no lasting cultural importance.

It is surprising to find how many things remained the same in the West, even after the control of the Imperial government had

been relaxed and the Germans ruled undisputed. At first it was possible for the government and the people to feel that the invaders had been absorbed and would live on as a small element of the population which would be useful in war. It would have taken a considerable degree of foresight to be able to predict in the year 423 that the Franks in northern Gaul and the Visigoths in southwestern Gaul would become as powerful as they later did, and that Italy would be battered into ruin by the struggles of the Ostrogoths and the Byzantines.

For a long time the nominal form of the government remained the same. Even Clovis, the political genius of the Franks, was willing to acknowledge the Imperial government as the ultimate source of his power. Of course this was nothing more than a polite fiction, since Clovis' victory over the Visigoths in 507 gave him almost complete control in Gaul. Gaul obviously was not to be governed from Rome as it had been.

Yet much of the Roman local government remained. The local administration of the Roman population continued as before. The towns kept their territorial limits and their town councils. The tenants on the great estates were still bound to their places on the land. Some of the tenants, of course, were now bound to German masters in place of the former Roman masters. The taxes were collected as before, at least in the early days of the period. The Roman law and the Roman courts were still the basis of justice.

The Germans lived scattered among the Romans, but under their own government. They paid no taxes to the Roman government, and the German government, which rendered no services, exacted no taxes. The German kings drew their personal revenues, which were the only state revenues, from the properties assigned to them. Their subjects lived under the Germanic law, which reflected the simpler form of social organization of the invaders.

The Church had a share in the government, as it had had since the days of Constantine. The bishop of each town not only had some minor judicial functions, but by his influence was able to do

much to keep the life of the town moving smoothly. After the Franks, following Clovis, became Catholic, the Frankish government held the Church in high honor and relied largely on the bishops for the management of the towns, although the royal government remained strictly secular.

The territories where the Germans lived can be said to have had an orderly government, both before and after the time when the Imperial control was shaken off. There were even people in the early fifth century who thought that life in the German lands was to be preferred to life among the Romans because of the intricate and burdensome economic and social organization of the Romans.

The chief difference between earlier government in the West and that of the late fifth and the sixth centuries was that the *Pax Romana*, disturbed as it may sometimes have been in earlier times, was no longer the ideal and the purpose of government. There was no longer a truly Imperial government which extended its power over the whole West, ruling the whole area on Roman principles.

The economic development of the West during these two centuries was roughly like the political; the economy became less unified, becoming to a greater extent fragmented into a number of separate areas. Scholars disagree as to when the West's international sea trade with the East was cut off. Some believe that this trade never recovered from the piracy of the Vandals, while some hold that the Moslems were the ones who really blocked off the Mediterranean highway between East and West. Be that as it may, the trade within the West itself surely suffered from the cutting off of Africa by the Vandals and from the rivalries of the Germanic states in Gaul and Spain.

With these limitations, economic life remained much as it had been. The workmen retained their traditions and the merchants retained theirs. A sound currency was maintained. Legal disputes about commercial matters were still settled by the old laws. The

Roman roads were regularly repaired. Farming methods did not change a great deal, nor did the system of land tenure.

Both the political and the economic systems of the West under the Germans of the sixth century were deserving of some respect. They embodied much of the experience of the Romans. They were fully as workable as most of the political and economic systems which the ancient world had known. The economic system was actually probably better than the strained and burdensome system of the fourth century as long as the peace was kept. Probably both the political and the economic systems were as good as those of the third century, when the Empire so signally failed to cope with the persistent problems of government. But we may say that the political and economic systems of the sixth century were under the control of amateurs; they were a legacy of professional experience that was bound to be expended.

The Greco-Roman high intellectual tradition went on for a while of its own momentum. By the sixth century, however, it had suffered serious damage. As the bonds between the two parts of the Empire were loosened and the circulation of educated men back and forth became less common, a good knowledge of Greek became far less common in the West.

St. Jerome, for instance, was brought up in the Latin culture and had little knowledge of Greek. He studied in Rome under the great Donatus, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the Latin classics. He then moved to the East and began there to improve his slight bookish knowledge of Greek. Those scholars who have tried to trace his intellectual development believe that they can follow the development of his mastery of the Greek language and his knowledge of Greek authors. The authors were not the old Greek classics, but the great theological writers. It was as if an American literary man, trained in a good university, went to live in France and became very competent in modern French literature without anything more than a slight acquaintance with the older French classics from having read a few textbooks.

St. Augustine never visited the eastern part of the Empire. He had an excellent Latin training in the little school in the town of Tagaste, in Africa, and then as a university student at Carthage and at Rome. He tells us plainly that Greek left him cold in his student days. In his maturer years as bishop and theologian he decided that he must get his Greek in hand, partly because of some patronizing remarks in a letter from Jerome about his lack of background. He worked away for years at Greek and finally became reasonably competent in it. He was like an American scholar who holds German at arm's length in his student days, is told by his reviewers that his work would gain in depth if he mastered the German studies in his field, and then patiently works up his German until he can understand the work of German scholars, without ever being able to speak German or read it with real ease and pleasure.

The secular Latin literary tradition continued in the West in the fifth century, as did the schools which supported it. To us the most interesting writer is Sidonius, who lived in Gaul and was a bishop. He gives us a picture of Roman nobles educated to write correct and uninspired Latin prose or verse, living a life of ease and elegance in great houses which had escaped the violence of the invasions. Side by side with these survivals of the old days lived the Germans, tall and uncouth barbarians whom one might affect to despise, but who must be treated with wary politeness. Romans trained in public affairs were much in demand as advisers of the Germans.

From the work of Sidonius one has the impression that literary training and activity were largely a badge of respectability for a Roman nobleman; one receives exactly the same impression from the work of Pliny, who wrote in the reign of Trajan, over three centuries earlier. Pliny, like Sidonius, performed the practical duties of an aristocrat while cultivating *belles-lettres* as a sort of duty to his class. Both men chide contemporaries who are indifferent to literature and prefer the life of unliterary pleasure.

But even the artificial sort of literature of which Sidonius' poetry is typical disappeared during the sixth century, and at the same time the schools of the West suffered a severe decline. What remained was literacy rather than literary culture. There was a group of men who could read and write (an accomplishment which was to grow rarer in the seventh century) and some of them even wrote bad poetry in praise of the rulers. Their literacy was mainly employed in the service of the government.

The culture of the Church also declined during this period. For a long time the Church had assumed that its leading men would be highly literate. They were invariably the products of the best pagan education, the Church having no educational system of its own. Such men as Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose had the cultural background and the literary skill to carry on any sort of argument with the best men whom the pagans could muster.

In the East the theologians continued to be highly educated men. As East and West drifted apart, however, even the theology of the East became less and less comprehensible to the West, not only because it was written in Greek, but because its philosophical background and subtle argument became less and less comprehensible to the West. More and more, too, the religious leaders of the West came to feel that the old-fashioned sort of education was unnecessary for a Christian, and the traditional schools decayed.

At the time of Justinian's death (565 A.D.) it had become plain that the Empire could not be reunited. The Byzantines were again in possession of most of the old African territories, to be sure, and were to hold them until the late 600's. However, the long Vandal interlude had greatly weakened Greco-Roman culture in Africa in its less material aspects. Although the Byzantines were to retain a precarious hold on parts of Italy for some time, their struggles with the Ostrogoths had done great harm to the economy and culture of Italy—and the Lombard invasion was soon to come. The Germanic governments of Gaul and Spain were

independent, though they vaguely felt the long-range political influence of Byzantium.

The Roman Empire, like all empires, was founded on injustice; it was distinguished from all other early empires by rising from injustice to an attempt at justice. Uniting Mediterranean man in a commonwealth based on the rule of law was a daring and noble conception. The Roman Empire performed a great task of absorbing and assimilating the best cultural achievements of the ancient world, adding its own characteristic contributions, and passing on this rich heritage to later ages. As we consider the conditions under which the West slowly moved into a new age, it seems only natural that the heirs to the West should have been unable to accept the more complex and fragile parts of their inheritance and should have had to content themselves with the simpler and more practical parts.

But can we not learn something of the future by our study of the Roman Empire? Will that study not yield some great secret of civilization? The answer is "No." There is no one great and portentous lesson to be learned from the history of the Roman Empire, although there are innumerable minor ones, nor can it offer us a prophecy of the fate of our own times.



# Index

Adrianople, 97  
Africa, 11, 12, 54, 159, 162, 164, 167, 172  
Alamanni, 61  
Alans, 157  
Alaric, 156  
Alexandria, 7  
Altar of Victory, 132-133  
Ammianus Marcellinus, 105, 142  
Ambrose, Saint, 133-134, 138, 142, 144  
*annona*, 69-70  
Antioch, 95-97  
Antoninus Pius, 23  
Arcadius, 99  
Archimedes, 39  
architecture, 35-36, 79  
Arianism, 127-130, 134, 163  
Aristides, Aelius, 30-31  
army, Roman, 18, 20, 25-26, 65, 74, 118-120  
art, 35, 78-80  
Asia Minor, 12, 13, 15, 44-45, 164  
Athaulf, 156  
Athenaeus, 78  
Athens, 28, 94-95  
Attila, 160-161  
Augustine, Saint, 131-132, 134-138, 142, 144, 148, 171  
Augustus, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23  
Aurelian, 62, 63, 67, 75  
Ausonius, 114, 142  
  
Baiac, 8-9  
Bassianus, 56-57  
  
Baynes, Norman H., 159  
Berenson, Bernard, 78  
bishops, 47, 123-124  
Boak, A. E. R., 118  
Bordeaux, 115  
Britain, 13, 14, 159  
bureaucracy, 106-107  
Burgundi, 155, 158  
Bury, John B., 5  
  
Caesar, Julius, 13, 19-20, 21  
Caracalla, 55-56  
Caracalla, Edict of, 55  
Carpenter, Rhys, 79  
Carthage, 9-11, 135-136  
Catholicism, 129, 134, 163  
Cato, 11  
Christianity, 3, 42-51, 80-85, 90-91, 94, 122-140, 142-149, 153-154, 165  
Cicero, 144  
*City of God, The*, 137, 148  
Claudian, 147-148  
Claudius I, 71  
Claudius II, 63  
Cleopatra, 15, 20  
Clovis, 129, 163, 168  
Commodus, 23, 53, 54, 71  
Constans, 92, 130  
Constantine the Great, 75, 89, 91-92, 103, 107-108, 122, 123, 126, 130-131  
Constantine II, 92, 130  
Constantine, commander in Britain, 155

Constantinople, 126-127  
 Constantius, father of Constantine the Great, 88, 91  
 Constantius, governor of Gaul, 155-157  
 Constantius, son of Constantine the Great, 92-93, 130-131, 133  
 contingency, 5  
 corporations, 71-72  
*curiales*, 68-71, 87-88, 104-105, 110-113  
 Dacia, 14, 63  
*De Rebus Bellicis*, 103-104, 119, 120, 151  
 Decius, 60, 61, 83-84  
 Diocletian, 52, 57, 63, 86-91  
 Diophantus, 80  
 divine right, 74-75  
 Domitian, 23  
 Donatists, 127

East, *see* Eastern Empire  
 Eastern Empire, 28, 107, 118-119, 121, 130, 140, 159, 164, 165, 166, 172  
 education, 78, 140, 143-144  
 Egypt, 15, 154  
 Elagabalus, *see* Bassianus  
 equestrian order (knights), 22  
 Eugenius, 108

failure of nerve, 43-44, 154  
*foederati*, 157  
 Franks, 61, 155, 157, 158, 163  
 Fuchs, Harald, 29

Gaius, 24  
 Galerius, 88, 91  
 Gallienus, 61-62, 66, 84  
 Gallus, 92  
 Gaul, 13, 149, 159, 160, 162, 172-173  
 Germans (*see also* Burgundi, Franks, Goths, Lombards, Ostrogoths, Suevi, Vandals, Visigoths), 16, 53, 61, 74, 89, 97-101, 105, 107, 115-121, 129, 140, 155-173  
 Germany, 8, 14, 15, 16, 68  
 Gibbon, Edward, 2, 3, 23-24  
 gilds, 71-72  
 Gnosticism, 47, 82-83  
 Gordian I, 59  
 Gordian III, 59  
 Goths, 60-61, 68, 73, 99, 129, 130  
 Gratian, 88, 133  
 Greece, 12  
 Greek literature, 76-78  
 Greeks:  
     in Italy, 8  
     in Sicily, 9

Hadrian, 22, 23, 25, 28, 33, 35  
 Hagia Sophia, 79  
 Heliogabalus, *see* Bassianus  
 heresy, 47-48, 82  
 Hippo, 137  
*Historia Augusta*, 147  
 Honorius, 99, 121, 155-157  
*hospitalitas*, 157, 159, 162  
 Huns, 98-99, 116, 121, 158, 160-161

Illyricum, 14  
 India, trade with, 7-8  
 intellectual fatigue, 32-34  
 Irenaeus, 47, 82  
 Islam, 164  
 Italy, 8, 15, 164, 172

Jerome, Saint, 142, 144, 170  
 Jovian, 97, 132  
 Judaism, 42, 43, 46  
 Julian the Apostate, 92-97, 130-132, 133  
 Julianus, Didius, 53  
 Justinian, 139, 164  
 Juvenal, 33

law, Roman, 40-41, 165-166, 168  
 Lepcis, 54  
 literature:  
     Christian, 34-35, 143, 145-146  
     Greek, 76-78  
     Roman, 33-35, 76-78, 146-148,  
         171-172  
 Lombards, 164, 172  
 Lutetia Parisiorum, 95

Macrinus, 55-56, 58, 66  
 Maesa, Julia, 56  
 Magnentius, 92, 108  
 Manichaeanism, 82-83  
 Marcus Aurelius, 23, 52, 53  
 Marxist interpretation of history, 2,  
     112  
 Masters of the Soldiers, 161  
 Maxentius, 91  
 Maximian, 88-89  
 Maximinus, 58-59, 65, 66  
 Maximus, 99, 108  
 Milan, 134, 136  
 military anarchy, 57-58  
 Moesia, 14  
 mosaic, 37  
 "Moselle, The," 115-116  
*munera*, 69-70, 110-113

Neoplatonism, 84-85, 94-95, 125, 131  
 Nepos, 162  
 New Persian Empire, *see* Persians  
 Nero, 23, 24  
 Nerva, 23  
 Noricum, 14  
 novel, 77

Octavian, *see* Augustus  
 Odenathus, 62-63, 67, 74  
 Odoacer, 162  
 Olympic Games, 138-139  
 oratory, 76-77  
 Origen, 80-81

Ostia, port of, 8  
 Ostrogoths, 162, 163, 164, 167, 172

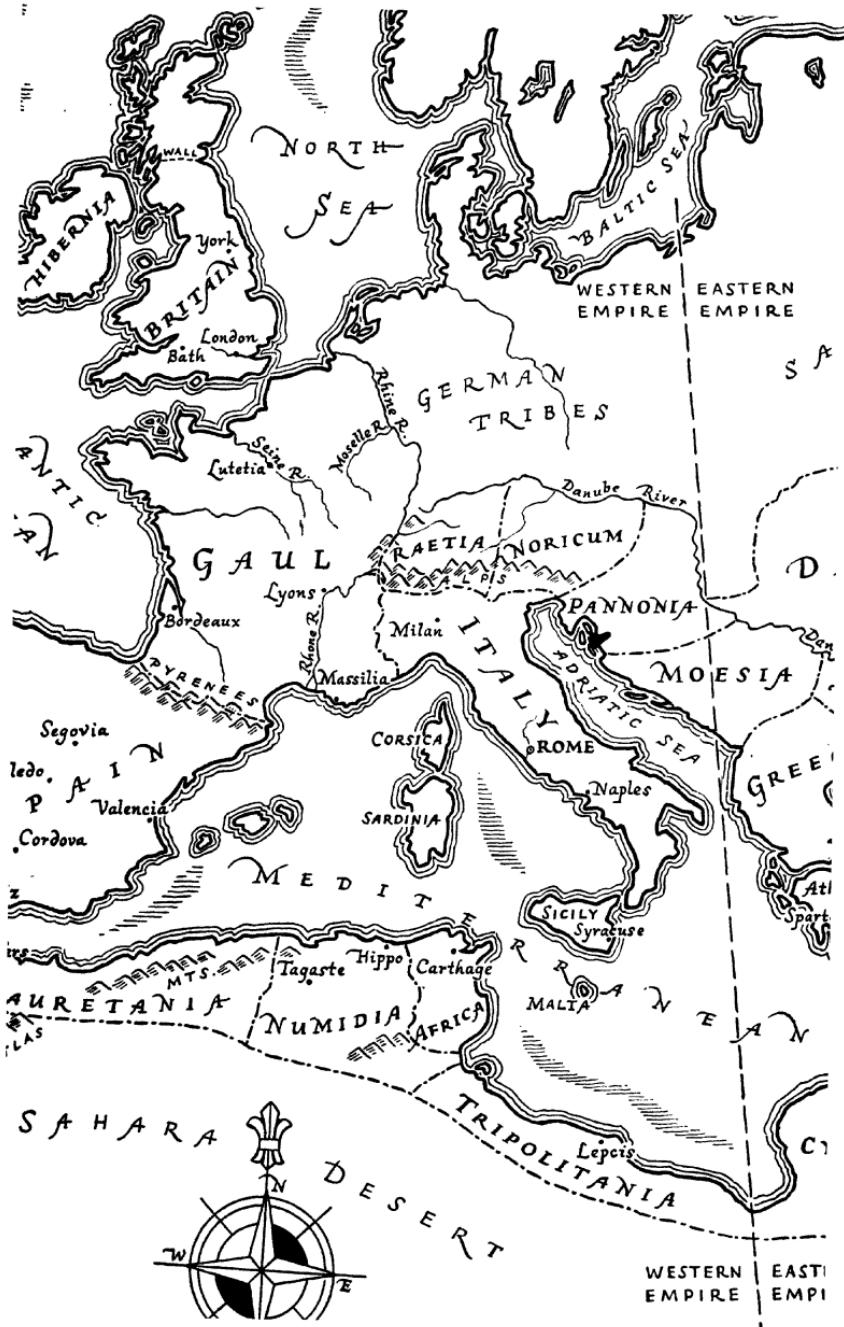
paganism, 83-85, 90, 94, 124-126,  
     138-139, 152-153  
 painting, 37  
 Pannonia, 14  
 Pappus, 80  
 Parthians, 17, 59  
*pax Romana*, 7, 11, 21  
 persecution, 48-50, 60, 84, 90-91  
 Persians, 59, 62, 73, 99, 116  
 persistent problems, 18, 52  
     army, 25-26, 74, 118-121  
     finance, 24-25, 67-72, 108-114  
     foreign affairs, 25, 73, 116-117  
     maintenance of the authority of  
         the central government, 18-23,  
         67, 102-107  
 Pertinax, Helvius, 53  
 Philip, 59-60  
 philosophy, 45, 46, 80, 90  
 Piganiol, André, 5, 118  
 plague, 2, 62, 64, 108-109  
 Plotinus, 84  
 Plutarch, 30  
 Pompey, 12  
 Postumus, 61-62, 67, 74  
 praetorian guard, 53  
 Probus, 63  
 Prudentius, 133, 148  
 Puteoli, 8

Raetia, 14  
 revelation, 43, 46-47  
 Romanization, 25-31, 44  
 Rome, city of, 7, 131, 141-142  
 Romulus Augustulus, 162  
 Rostovtzeff, Michael, 2  
 Rutilius Namatianus, 147

Sarmatians, 16  
 science, 37-40, 80  
 sculpture, 36, 79

Scythians, 16, 71-72  
 Senate, 19, 21, 22, 53, 56-57, 58-59,  
     64-66, 86, 111  
 senators, *see* Senate  
 senatorial order, *see* Senate  
 Severus, Alexander, 57-58, 59, 65,  
     67, 74  
 Severus, Septimius, 54-55, 64, 69  
 Sicily, 9-10  
 Slavs, 164  
 Soaemias, Julia, 56  
 Spain, 9, 10, 159, 162, 164, 172-173  
 Spengler, Oswald, 1, 3, 4, 6  
 statesmanship, Christian, 46-47, 51,  
     82, 124, 153-154  
 Stilicho, 99-100, 107, 120, 148, 155  
 Suevi, 157, 158  
 Swift, Emerson, 79  
 Symmachus, 133  
 syncretism, religious, 42-43  
  
 Tertullian, 77, 80  
 Theodoric, *see* Ostrogoths  
 Theodosius, 99, 134, 138  
 Tiberius, 23  
 Titus, 23  
  
 Toynbee, Arnold, 1, 3, 4, 6  
 Trajan, 14, 22, 23, 25, 71  
 Trinity, the, 81, 128, 130  
  
 Ulfilas, 129  
  
 Valens, 97-99, 132  
 Valentinian, 97, 99, 132  
 Valentinian II, 99  
 Valerian, 61, 84  
 Vandals, 138, 157, 158, 159, 160, 164,  
     167, 172  
 Verres, 9-10  
 Vespasian, 22, 23, 24, 54  
 Visigoths, 97-100, 105, 106, 156-158,  
     163  
  
 Wallia, *see* Visigoths  
 Warmington, B. H., 111  
 West, *see* Western Empire  
 Western Empire, 6, 29, 43-44, 107,  
     121, 130, 140, 149, 159, 163, 164,  
     166-172  
  
 Zeno, 162  
 Zenobia, 63, 67





# THE ROMAN EMPIRE



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